Theses and Dissertations 1. Thesis and Dissertation Collection, all items

2006-12

DoD's use of Iraqi exiles

Mason, Edward J.

Monterey California. Naval Postgraduate School

http://hdl.handle.net/10945/2464

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

DOD'S USE OF IRAQI EXILES

by

Edward J. Mason

December 2006

Thesis Advisor: Anna Simons
Second Reader: Abbas Kadhim

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE December 2006	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE DoD's Use of Iraqi Exiles		5. FUNDING NUMBERS
6. AUTHOR Edward J. Mason		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air Force Institute for National Security Studies		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A

13. ABSTRACT

  The U.S. government has utilized exiles for decades, the latest example being the use of Iraqi exiles starting after the Gulf War. For close to thirteen years America supported opposition groups, overtly after the signing of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. DoD's role until months before the invasion of Iraq was minimal, but then increased dramatically. Exiles selected by DoD were trained in civil affairs operations and embedded with great success in small teams into U.S. civil affairs units.

  Another program, even more ad hoc, involved Ahmad Chalabi's fighting forces. Not receiving the welcome from Iraqis that intelligence experts told them to expect, U.S. military commanders were eager to put an "Iraqi face" on operations and build the core of the new Iraqi army. Although not a success, there are a number of lessons learned from the experience.

  Exiles have many of the skills necessary in conventional and asymmetric warfare: language skills, familial ties, and cultural proficiency. But this unique segment of our society needs to be better utilized by DoD. After analyzing each of the Iraqi exile programs in detail, suggestions on how to harness needed skills in the future are offered.

14. SUBJECT TERMS Ahmad Chalabi, Army Special Forces, civil affairs, counterinsurgency, diaspora, exiles, Free Iraqi Forces (FIF), Free Iraqi Fighting Force (FIFF), Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, Iraqi opposition groups, Operation Iraqi Freedom			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 75
			16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT: Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE: Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT: Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL

NSN 7540-01-280-5500   Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)

Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

DOD'S USE OF IRAQI EXILES

Edward J. Mason
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.S., United States Naval Academy, 1999

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degrees of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

AND

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2006

Author: Edward J. Mason

Approved by: Dr. Anna Simons
                    Thesis Advisor

                    Dr. Abbas Kadhim
                    Second Reader

                    Dr. Gordon H. McCormick
                    Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis

                    Dr. Douglas Porch
                    Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

The U.S. government has utilized exiles for decades, the latest example being the use of Iraqi exiles starting after the Gulf War. For close to thirteen years America supported Iraqi opposition groups, overtly after the signing of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. DoD's role until months before the invasion of Iraq was minimal, but then increased dramatically. Iraqi opposition groups provided names of volunteers willing to work with the U.S. military. Most were turned away for a number of reasons, but those selected were trained in civil affairs operations and embedded with great success in small teams into U.S. civil affairs units.

Another program, even more ad hoc, involved Ahmad Chalabi's fighting forces. Not receiving the welcome from Iraqis that intelligence experts told them to expect, U.S. military commanders were eager to put an "Iraqi face" on operations and build the core of the new Iraqi army. Chalabi's fighters, escorted by Army Special Forces A-Teams, provided a number of useful services to the war effort, but with minimal logistical support and hindered by Chalabi's political ambitions, they were quickly disbanded.

Exiles have many of the skills necessary in conventional and asymmetric warfare: language skills, familial ties, and cultural proficiency. But this unique segment of our society needs to be better utilized by DoD. After analyzing each of the Iraqi exile programs in detail, suggestions on how to harness needed skills in the future are offered.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I.   INTRODUCTION

Small cells of Islamist extremists are considered one of the major threats to U.S. national security. The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism directs the agencies involved in national security to accomplish four goals: defeat terrorists and their organizations; deny sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists; diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit; and defend U.S. citizens and interests at home and abroad.[1] Essentially, the United States must have organizations capable of capturing or killing terrorists, conducting counterinsurgency operations, performing stability and reconstruction operations and, finally, gathering intelligence. To reach this goal, the U.S. government, specifically the Department of Defense (DoD), must be able to interact with populations in many different societies. Al Qaida, just one of many violent Islamist organizations, is estimated to have terrorist cells in varying stages of development in sixty countries.[2]

While U.S. military personnel are given cultural awareness training before deployments, a more sophisticated knowledge of a country is often necessary. Moreover, language skills are critical to success in conventional and unconventional conflicts, yet the U.S. military lacks trained linguists in many dialects where it has a presence.

DoD is increasing funds available for foreign language training, but the training takes years to complete. To make the situation more difficult, there is the question of which languages soldiers should learn. Exiles within diaspora communities in the United States may provide a partial solution to this dilemma. With a unique cultural background coupled with language skills that non-natives will never achieve, exiles should be considered more closely as an asset, not a threat.

Exile operations organized by the U.S. government are not a new idea. While I briefly examine a handful of Cold War exile operations by the United States, the focus of this thesis is to provide a case study of the U.S. government's relationship with, and

---

1 The Whitehouse, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (April 2003).

2 Bradley Graham, "Shortfalls of Special Operations Command are Cited," *Washington Post* (November 17, 2005), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/16/AR2005111602282.html (accessed January 16, 2006).

finally use of, Iraqi exiles. Our twelve-year involvement (1991-2003) with the Iraqi opposition groups reveals much not only about them, but about the U.S. government as well. The President of the United States and the Office of the Secretary of Defense were pitted against Congress over support to Iraqi exiles. Agency infighting and bureaucracy at its best and worst is chronicled, and an example of the true power of the military to decide when or when not to obey orders from civilian leadership is illustrated.

A. THE STORY OF AN IRAQI-AMERICAN

There are thousands of stories told by exiles about Saddam's torture chambers and mass graves. These stories are important to understanding the history of exiles, but they only explain why many exiles departed Iraq, not what they have done since they left or what they hope to accomplish in the future. Below, the brief life story of one Iraqi-American shows how individual exiles have been able to surmount victimhood to become American patriots, politicians, and businessmen.

Ghalib Bradosti is not easily definable. He is an American citizen, but rarely spends time at his home outside of Washington, D.C., where he has lived for the last ten years. Instead, he is continuously flying to Europe and the Middle East to run the family business, which consists of a conglomerate of smaller companies that participate in reconstruction and transportation services in Iraq, security consulting, marketing for oil companies, and providing financial services throughout the Middle East.

Born the son of a tribal leader in Irbil, Iraq, Ghalib aspired to study in America but the Iraqi government at the time was restrictive in the number of student visas it approved. Instead, he began studying physics at Baghdad University, but after a few years departed and enrolled in the Military Academy in Baghdad in 1987. Before graduation, Iraq invaded Kuwait and the United States responded with force. All of the cadets were instructed to go home and return to school in one month. Most never did. By late-1992, Ghalib secured a visa through the U.S. Embassy in Turkey and traveled to the United States.

Barely capable of speaking English upon arrival, Ghalib earned his bachelors degree from Wheeling Jesuit University in five years. Through the Kurdish diaspora in Washington, D.C., he also became interested in politics. By 1999, Ghalib, as a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), was regularly meeting with policy-makers at

the Department of State (DoS), DoD, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the White House. As of 1998, the official policy of the United States was to remove Saddam Hussein, and opposition groups like the PUK were originally considered to be the political and military arm of the effort.

Iraqis unable to leave Iraq commonly complain though that in contrast to toiling under Hussein, exiles work for change while living comfortably in the West. Although Ghalib served as one of the principal authors of the DoS-sponsored *Transition to Democracy in Iraq* report by Iraqi exiles, he was more than just a scribe.[3] As DoD solicited names for the Free Iraqi Forces, Ghalib volunteered for service and recruited additional volunteers from the diaspora. Days after the war in Iraq began, Ghalib was embedded into a U.S. civil affairs unit in Basra and later flew up to Irbil. His mission, given to him directly by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, was to get a message to Hussein's forces in the Irbil area: if they surrendered they would be allowed to return to their barracks. Subsequently, entire units surrendered and Irbil fell without a shot fired.

Not every Iraqi exile has contributed as much as Ghalib has to the American effort in Iraq, but he demonstrates what is possible if the "right" exiles work with the U.S. government toward a common goal.

The United States has an interesting attachment to Iraq through foreign policy interaction and an estimated 350,000 Iraqi-Americans or green card holders claiming Iraq as their homeland while living in the United States.[4] To the best of my knowledge, there has only been limited research done on the intersection of U.S. foreign policy objectives and the Iraqi exiles residing in the United States. A significant literature exists on diaspora politics in general, the historical use of exiles by the United States to reach foreign policy objectives, and the history of Iraq and the flight of exiles abroad.

---

3 Democratic Principles Working Group, *The Transition to Democracy in Iraq* (December 2002), http://www.iraqfoundation.org/studies/2002/dec/study.pdf (accessed October 5, 2005).

4 Estimates range from a low of 200,000 and go as high as 360,000 people in the U.S. with ties to Iraq. See "Population Estimates of Americans of Iraqi/Chaldean Ancestry," *Arab American Institute* http://www.aaiusa.org/Issues/Iraq/iraqi_americans.htm (accessed September 12, 2005); and, Bill Nichols, "Exiles Living in USA Fear Missing Out on Election," *USA Today* (January 6, 2005), http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2005-01-06-iraqis-us_x.htm (accessed October 10, 2005).

Following a brief discussion of these three topics, I will outline the remaining chapters which discuss, in detail, the use of Iraqi exiles by DoD.

B.   EXILES AND DIASPORAS

Before going further, the terms *exile* and *diaspora* must be clarified. *Exile* refers to a person who voluntarily or by expulsion lives outside of his or her country of origin. *Diaspora* is a more difficult to define. Gabriel Sheffer, a professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, provides the most complete definition available:

> An ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries…[5]

Diasporas can be categorized by various characteristics: by grievance, reason for departure from the homeland, motivation to influence homeland politics, size, and organizational make-up, among others.[6]   For the purposes of this thesis, 'exiled opposition groups' will be used synonymously with 'diasporas.'

Government employees in many different agencies who recently worked with diasporas and exiles have spoken to some degree about the importance of understanding the motivations of groups and individuals.[7]   The U.S. government and an opposition group can share a goal, but the ways and means to reach it are often in contention. While both Sheffer and American historian and John Higham touch on this subject, Paul Hockenos concentrates on this issue in his latest work, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars.* He unravels the role played by exile groups in fanning the flames of conflict, and specifically writes about how exile groups "helped provide the

---

[5] Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9-10.

[6] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997).

[7] Personal interview.

ideologies, the leadership, the money, and in many cases, the military hardware that fueled the violent conflicts [in former Yugoslavia]."[8]

Government advisor and Oxford professor, Paul Collier has shown empirically that a country which has recently ended conflict and has a large diaspora living in the United States is at much greater risk of returning to violent conflict for a variety of reasons: members of diasporas continue to nurse grievances; they are in comparison wealthier to their countrymen, so back home they can finance violence; and, they do not suffer any of the consequences of renewed violence.[9] While diasporas can foment violence, Collier argues they can also be very helpful in post-conflict reconstruction if managed correctly to take advantage of business connections and cultural skills. These skills are why the United States has, for the last fifty years, recruited and utilized exiles from diasporas for a variety of operations. The record has shown mixed results, and the most recent experiment of co-opting Iraqi opposition groups is overwhelmingly viewed as a failure. I hope to make it clear by the end of this thesis that exiles are, for the most part, a strategic *asset*, but one that is too often mismanaged.

C.   THE HISTORICAL USE OF EXILES BY THE UNITED STATES

Long before Ahmad Chalabi and 620 Iraq National Congress exiles-turned-soldiers descended upon Nasiriyah, Iraq,[10] or American and European Iraqis were integrated into U.S. civil affairs units fighting Saddam Hussein's forces, the United States utilized exiles in strategic operations. The following section describes a few of these operations briefly and indicates whether they were successful and why. Although these operations took place along the full spectrum of warfare, exiles offered similarly unique skills in each case. Furthermore, describing these historical cases serves two purposes: to show that utilizing exiles is not a new phenomenon, and to make the case that, if history is any indicator, exiles will be used again by the U.S. government in the future.

---

8 Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

9 Paul Collier, "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy," *World Bank* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, June 15, 2000), www.worldbank.org/research/conflict/papers/civilconflict.htm (accessed May 15, 2006).

10 Linda Robinson and Kevin Whitelaw, "Deploying the Free Iraqi Forces: What Role for the Anti-Saddam Iraqi Fighters?" *U.S. News and World Report* (April 7, 2004), http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/iraq/articles/fiff030407.htm (accessed August 24, 2006).

In 1955, President Eisenhower authorized the CIA to conduct operations to "undermine international communism" by establishing "underground, resistance, and guerrilla groups."[11] Two years later, as the Chinese attempted to solidify their position in Tibet against an increasingly organized Tibetan resistance, Eisenhower recognized a unique opportunity to complicate China's aspirations to expand communism. The operation called for a two-pronged approach: equipping the Tibetans with the physical means to fight the Chinese, primarily with air drops; and, training Tibetan exiles residing in India in guerrilla warfare. Following training in Saipan and Okinawa, and later at the CIA-run Camp Hale in Colorado, Tibetan exiles were airdropped into Tibet to fight the Chinese. Following initial successes, the resistance withered under improved Chinese capabilities, which in turn restricted U.S. command and control of the guerrillas. Finally, in 1967, with relations with India (from where operations were launched) growing cold and increased emphasis placed on Vietnam, the CIA terminated the operation.[12]

One of the earliest American operations using exiles, the Tibetan experience highlights the limited capability an exile organization has without U.S. personnel working along side it in a command and control position, or, at a minimum, in an advisory role. Viewed another way, the United States has a limited capacity to manage exile groups on the ground if Americans are not co-located with the guerillas. The next exile operation remedied this shortcoming by placing CIA operatives with the operational unit, but even with this fix the following well-known mission was doomed before it began.

Trained by the CIA in Nicaragua, 1200 Cuban exiles recruited from southern Florida and two CIA officers landed at the Bay of Pigs, Cuba, in an effort to overthrow Fidel Castro in mid-April 1961. Days into the operation the exiles, organized into Brigade 2506, found themselves badly outnumbered (1200 against 200,000 Castro soldiers).[13] Today, the mission is overwhelmingly considered to have been a disaster, but

---

11 Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 170. Cited in Philip J. Barton, *Tibet and China: History, Insurgency, and Beyond* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, June 2003), 40.

12 Barton, 71-74.

13 Grayson L. Lynch, *Decision for Disaster: Betrayal at the Bay of Pigs* (Washington D.C.: Brassey's, 1998), 158.

not because the exiles failed to fight bravely. Organizational politics internal to the U.S. government ensured failure. President John F. Kennedy, although he publicly accepted responsibility for the debacle, privately blamed the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The CIA produced poor intelligence and the military did not give the operation the attention it deserved. Furthermore, the CIA assumption that landing the exiles would provoke a massive popular rising against Castro proved incorrect.[14]

Recognized to be strategic failure, the Bay of Pigs did not result in the exiles being blamed. Following the release of the survivors by the Castro regime, President Kennedy held a ceremony for Brigade 2506 at the Orange Bowl Stadium in Miami. To a crowded stadium, Kennedy recognized the Cuban exiles.

> Your small Brigade is a tangible reaffirmation that the human desire for freedom and independence is essentially unconquerable. Your conduct and valor are proof that although Castro and his fellow dictators may rule nations, they do not rule people; that they may imprison bodies, but they do not imprison spirits….Keep alive the spirit of the Brigade so that some day the people of Cuba will have a free chance to make a free choice.[15]

The CIA, along with members of Brigade 2506, continued attempts to overthrow Castro. Between 1960 and 1967, 2000 Cuban exiles under CIA operation JM WAVE conducted 2126 operations to aid Cuban resistance organizations, to assassinate Castro, and to collect intelligence.[16] Exiles would once again be called upon to collect intelligence more than 20 years later, this time in the Middle East.

Hostilities steadily increased in Lebenon in 1975 and culminated in the early 1980s in civil war. With Beirut reeling from civil war, the Iranian backed group Hezbollah emerged from the fray as a leading Shi'a Islamist organization. On October 23, 1983, a suicide bomber drove a truck loaded with explosives into the Marine barracks

---

14 Lucien S. Vandenbrouke, *Perilous Options* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48-49.

15 Haynes Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs: The Leader's Story of Brigade 2506* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1964), 345.

16 Lynch, 171.

in Beirut, killing over 240 and wounding 80. Along with the bombing, organizations (Hezbollah officially formed in 1985 and is on the DoS Foreign Terrorist Organization list) kidnapped Americans.

While the CIA ran a limited number of agents in Beirut, the military demanded that before any rescue mission was launched, American eyes needed to verify the hostages. CIA case officers were not in a position to meet this standard, so they began recruiting Shi'a Muslims living in the Detroit area. Only natives of the area who spoke the dialect, looked like the locals, and maintained familial connections and trust networks stood a chance of penetrating terrorist organizations. The exiles-turned-agents were so effective that "Hezbollah and its allies became increasingly suspicious of people returning from the United States—even their own relatives."[17] Unfortunately, the exiles' access became limited before the hostages were found.

Throughout its history the United States has relied upon indigenous populations, refugees, and exiles. Other examples, although not necessarily representing complete programs, include the Indian Scouts used during the Civil War, the Philippine Scouts of the Spanish-American War, the operators identified through Lodge Act during the 1950s which thereby enabled the U.S. Army to recruit Eastern European refugees residing in Western Europe, and the Kit Carson Scouts of the Vietnam War.[18]

D.   IRAQIS ABROAD: THE FLIGHT OF THE EXILES

The most recent example of American use of displaced locals began at the end of the Gulf War (Desert Storm) in 1991 through the first year of Operation Iraqi Freedom (2004).[19] To better understand who these exiles are, three general topics related to them need to be addressed: the historical factors that pushed Iraqis from their country; the development and fostering of opposition groups by Iraqi exiles; and, the role host countries played in shaping and using these opposition groups.

---

17 Duane R. Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons: My Life in the CIA* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1997), 341.

18 Charles K. Dalgleish, *A New "Lodge Act" for the U.S. Army – A Strategic Tool for the Global War On Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2004), http://www.ndu.edu/nwc/writing/AY04/awardpapers/Nominated%20Paper--Dalgleish--04.pdf (accessed December 10, 2005).

19 Exiles today are recruited into the U.S. Army's 09L program (Translator Aid) and are employed by private companies to work in the Middle East in a variety of jobs.

It is difficult to determine exactly who left Iraq, when they left, why they left, and where they ultimately ended up. It is even more challenging to write generally about a diaspora that is so fractured along ethnic, religious, and political lines. While there has been a steady flow of Iraqis out of the country, certain historical events clearly increased the rate of departure. Departing Iraqis spread to a variety of countries that were hospitable to their beliefs. Moreover, during major political upheavals in the Middle East, such as the Iranian Revolution, countries in the region revealed their intentions toward Iraq, and for the Iraqi opposition, by pushing their Iraqi exiles toward specific goals.

1. Forever Abroad, or Return Home?

Since the establishment of Iraq in 1921, different segments of the population have left the country because their beliefs challenged the goal of a united homogeneous nation-state. The exiled populations, starting with the Assyrians (a non-indigenous Christian community) and the Jews (native to Iraq), were later followed by Shi'a, Kurds and Turkmen who either left because of persecution or were forcibly removed from the country. As portions of each ethnic sect were forced to leave Iraq by a centrifugal force, they had to decide whether to maintain ties with Iraq, thereby recognizing the legitimacy of the state, or reject Iraq, as well as any hope or right of return.[20] The centripetal force of Iraq, and its ability to keep enticing Iraqi exiles with the hope of return, proved compelling for many groups.[21]

By the early 1950s the Iraqi Jewish population had dwindled from over 100,000 to an estimated 5,000 people. Following an assault by the Iraqi army in 1933, thousands of Assyrians, as well as their leadership, went into exile and eventually established religious centers in London and Chicago. While these two groups are historically important, they both largely abandoned their ties to Iraq. The rest of this section

---

20 Ariel I. Ihram, "Returning Exiles to Iraqi Politics," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs* Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2005), http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/meria/ meria_mar05/meria05_aha01.pdf (accessed September 29, 2005).

21 Politically minded Iraqi exiles have fostered the only serious debate on important political questions in Iraq, consistently writing in journals in Cyprus and Damascus, among others. See Ihram; and, Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, "The Historiography of Modern Iraq," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 96 (1991), http://www.jstor.org/view/ 00028762/di981895/98p2403d/0 (accessed December 29, 2006), p. 1408.

concentrates on exiles from the majority ethnic group in Iraq, the Shi'a, and the historically marginalized Kurds from northern Iraq. Both refused to sever links to their homeland.

2.   1968-1979: The Ascendancy of the Ba'th Party

With the fall of the monarchy in 1958 and the complete control of the government by the Ba'th party in 1968, opposition groups that had formed during the previous decade moved from trying to change policy at the margins to outright opposition to the regime.[22] The secular pan-Arab vision of the Ba'th party found critics in both Sunni and Shi'a Islamists. The Sunni organization, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun (the Muslim Brotherhood), and the Shi'a organization, al-Da'wa, led by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, presented direct threats to the Ba'th party. The Shi'a were not so concerned with living under Sunni rule per se, but instead feared the ruthless and violent methods used by the Ba'th party to build a secular Arab nation.

As the Ba'th party's coercive apparatus grew in strength most of the Shi'a religious leaders fled the country to Syria, Lebanon, or Iran. In 1969, the Ba'th began deporting Shi'a in large numbers, believing them to represent an Iranian fifth column. Within a few years it is believed tens of thousands were forced into exile.[23] Then, in 1979, the Iranian revolution and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini reinvigorated the Shi'a Islamist al-Da'wa party. In response, the Ba'th party imprisoned and executed large numbers of al-Da'wa's followers.[24] During this purge the Ba'th executed Sadr and effectively halted any further attempts by the Shi'a to draw other opposition groups into a united movement for regime change.

3.   1980-1988: The Iran-Iraq War

With the start of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980, the internal Iraqi conflict between the Ba'th party and Shi'a Islamists turned regional. Before the war Iraqi exiles worked with internal opposition groups against the Ba'th, with little foreign intervention. This changed in 1982 when Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim founded the Supreme Council

---

22 Ihram.

23 Ibid.

24 Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 216-220.

for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) in Iran. Iraqi exiles living in Iran and supported by the Persians for the first time fought against their own countrymen. SCIRI, a Shi'a Islamist organization, slowly moved from a militant group to a political party, leaving military matters to its Badr Brigade.

Even so, Iraqi Shi'a did not offer a unified front then, and they still do not today. SCIRI alienated a fraction of its supporters when it subscribed to the official Iranian doctrine of rule by a chief cleric.[25] Al-Da'wa, exhibiting its nationalist streak, found this to be unacceptable because it did not want Iraq to be an Iranian proxy. The Shi'a were also further divided because they constituted the majority of the enlisted ranks in Saddam's army.

The two largest Kurdish groups similarly did not work together toward a common goal. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) were often in conflict with one another. Furthermore, Arab nationalist exiles in Syria refused to work with Kurdish nationalists, but SCIRI Islamists did align with Kurdish Islamists.[26] Fractionalization and infighting among opposition groups continued throughout the Iran-Iraq war and restricted their effectiveness during the Gulf War.

4. 1990–1991: The Gulf War

After Saddam's military retreated from Kuwait, beaten but not broken, civil unrest inflamed by opposition leaders spread throughout the country. The Shi'a in the south quickly took control of Basra and the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf. In the north, the Kurds liberated their cities, while in Baghdad the security forces held. Within weeks Hussein regained control of Iraq using all means necessary, including the gassing of the Kurds. He did not lose power to opposition groups for two reasons: first, none of the opposition groups were organized and capable of uniting a nation; second, Hussein's attempts to appeal to Iraqis as the devil they knew (versus rule by a competing ethnic group) proved effective.[27]

---

25 Tripp, 246-247.

26 Ahram.

27 For a detailed summary of why opposition groups failed to capitalize on Saddam's weakness following the Gulf War, see Faleh A. Jabar, "Why the Uprising Failed." Ed. Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 103-113.

5.   1991–2003: Infighting Amongst Opposition Groups

Following the Gulf War, Kanan Makiya argues that the acquiescence of the Iraqi people to the Ba'th party dissipated.[28]   Disillusionment grew, yet Saddam's systematic torture grew as well. Many Iraqis fled the country, or those who were already overseas decided not to return.[29] The opening of the Iraq-Jordanian border in 1991 increased the already steady stream of people leaving.[30] Most of those who left the country to join the already two million exiles are believed to have been the wealthy and better-educated Iraqis. Exiled opposition groups recognized the unique opportunity presented by this boost to their numbers and the perceived weakening of Saddam, and for the first time agreed to meet under one banner, as the Iraqi National Congress (INC).

Meeting twice in 1992, the INC initially was a true opposition umbrella organization, including in its ranks SCIRI, al-Da'wa, both Kurdish parties, and a number of smaller organizations. By 1995, however, only a shell of the original INC remained as parties removed their representatives because of ideological disagreements between the groups. By 1996 the Iraqi government destroyed the INC headquarters in northern Iraq killing upwards of 200 members. The INC never recovered.[31]

In 2001, leading up to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States placed a renewed emphasis on the need for opposition groups to form a unified political front. Disagreement with the U.S. government over the role the exiles would play in a liberated Iraq and which opposition groups should receive U.S. support slowed progress. Larry Diamond argues that the Vice President's Office as well as the Office of the Secretary of

---

28 Kanan Makiya, "How Saddam Held on to Power." Ed. Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 118.

29 In 1995 the Iraqi government required skilled persons wishing to travel or study abroad to deposit ID1 million in cash in a bank account to ensure their return. See Sarah Graham-Brown, *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 205-206.

30 More than 100,000 Iraqis are believed to have fled to Jordan in 1991, with the majority of exiles moving from Jordan to another location outside of Iraq shortly thereafter. See US Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1994* (Washington D.C.: 1994), 110. Cited in Sarah Graham-Brown.

31 For a complete history of most of the opposition parties and their leadership, see "Iraq's Major Political Groupings," *Middle East Reference* (2005), http://middleeastreference. org.uk/iraqiopposition.html (accessed 29 January 2006).

Defense supported handing Iraq to Chalabi, the leader of the INC.[32] In contrast, the CIA supported Ayad Allawi, the leader of the Iraqi National Accord, and actively lobbied against Chalabi. DoS supported yet another candidate, Adnan Pachachi, a secular-nationalist intellectual. Months before the invasion, DoD was starting to orchestrate post-conflict reconstruction operations. Because of the lack of consensus about what the exiles' role should be in post-conflict Iraq and whether an exile-led interim government should be used at all, the exiles in the end paid for U.S. government and leadership failures.

E.   CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter II focuses on the creation and implementation of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (ILA). The ILA not only formed the foundation for future financial support to Iraqi exiles, but also overtly stated America's goal of removing Hussein from power.

The ILA was the culmination of the work and ideas of two different entities: ex-Special Operations and CIA officers developing an unconventional plan that utilized Iraqi exiles as a fighting unit; and conservative intellectuals using their influence and access, as well as current political events, to push for a more militant stance toward Saddam, calling for rollback instead of containment by way of a strategy.

Chapters III and IV specifically analyze two DoD programs that utilized exiles. The programs had similar names—the Free Iraqi Forces (FIF) and the Free Iraqi Fighting Forces (FIFF)—yet differed significantly. One program trained American- and European-Iraqi exiles in Hungary in the months leading up to the war. Following training, the exiles were embedded as small teams into U.S. Army and Marine civil affairs units. The other exile program consisted of four companies of exiles under the oversight of U.S. Army Special Forces teams.

Chapter V summarizes my findings and attempts to place the Iraqi exile experience into a larger context; are exiles a valuable tool in reaching foreign policy objectives, both in the short- and in the long-term? And under what circumstances and to what ends?

---

32 Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York, NY: Times Books, 2005), 28-29.

F.   PRÉCIS

War, religious differences, and ethnic conflict in the Middle East have moved waves of exiles to America over the past century. The language skills and cultural knowledge many exiles bring with them may be useful to the U.S. government in combating its enemies along the full spectrum of warfare, ranging from information operations against Islamists, to tracking down high-value targets, to civil affairs operations in a conventional setting.

Before this is possible or advisable, however, the exiles, to include their history and motivations, must be understood. Moreover, the U.S. government must learn from past exile operations and develop improved methods of utilizing this strategic asset in the future.

G.   A NOTE ON SOURCES

The information used to build this case study and the follow-on analysis is drawn from three sets of sources: published writings, unpublished writings, and interviews. Literary sources anchor this thesis to an already accepted and vetted body of knowledge. While these sources are essential to understanding the overall context, interviews yielded a wealth of unreported details. Unfortunately, the majority of interviews were conducted with the understanding that the interviewee's identity would remain unknown. This is understandable given the sensitivity of this subject and because the majority of those interviewed still hold positions within the U.S. government.   Interviewees include personnel from DoD, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Executive Branch, DoS, CIA, and former Iraqi opposition groups, among others.

II.   THE IRAQ LIBERATION ACT

The U.S. government has a long history utilizing exiles. From operations in Cuba to Tibet, America has relied on the cultural knowledge, language skills, and the perceived low political cost of using exiles. The U.S. government hoped to capitalize on the unique characteristics of Iraqi exiles as far back as 1991, sponsoring opposition groups in its attempts to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Indeed, President William Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (ILA), making the removal of Saddam Hussein, with the help of political opposition groups composed of exiles, a policy objective.

This chapter focuses on the origins of the ILA, emphasizing the special interest groups involved in the process of pushing the U.S. government away from containment and toward a policy of rollback. I discuss the consequences of the policy, and then delineate the difficulties in implementing the ILA from the points of view of both DoS and DoD. Finally, based on the analysis and the current security environment, I make recommendations for future legislation regarding exiles.

A.   FROM CONTAINMENT TO CONTAINMENT PLUS TO ROLLBACK

U.S. policy towards Iraq has gone through many shifts since the Persian Gulf War, but containment of Hussein remained the goal of the U.S. government for the better part of a decade. When Clinton signed the ILA, U.S. policy encouraged regime change in Iraq, but did not specifically outline the means to this end. 'Containment plus' describes a policy whose advocates sought regime change via sanctions and who supported the non-lethal training (in democratic practices) of opposition groups. In contrast, 'rollback' is a policy that advocated military support for the opposition groups in order to defeat Saddam Hussein.

1.   Sanctions

United Nations Security Counsel (UNSC) Resolution 661, and 687 following the Persian Gulf War, applied economic sanctions against Iraq to support an internationally accepted policy of containment. With the exception of humanitarian supplies, Iraq was blocked from importing or exporting goods. The UN planned to lift sanctions only when Saddam Hussein complied with all of its requirements, including the dismantling of his

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programs. Sarah Graham-Brown, author of *Sanctioning Saddam*, argues that individual countries had different goals concerning sanctions. France, Russia, and China, for instance, accepted that "sanctions are designed to change the Government of Iraq's behavior" as defined in Resolution 687. This meant sanctions would be lifted when Hussein eliminated his WMD program and accepted Kuwait's sovereignty and borders.[33] The American and British goal, on the other hand, was the downfall of the Hussein regime in Iraq. Because, in their view, Hussein was incapable of complying with the requirements of Resolution 687, the sanctions would stay in place until his regime fell. The goal of the sanctions was not to pressure Hussein to change, but only to weaken and contain him until his opponents within Iraq removed him from power.[34]

More than just a debate within the Security Council, sanctions affected the overall regional balance of power. Throughout the 1980s, external support ensured that Iraq and Iran balanced each other. If this balance was maintained, neither country would be able to fulfill its ambition for regional domination. The sanctions placed a strain on this strategy. Iraq, if substantially weakened by sanctions, would not be able to offset Iranian aggression. Additionally, if the Saddam Hussein regime were to fall, Iran could take advantage of this transition period.

To complicate matters further, if Saddam Hussein were to fall from power, who was capable of taking over the country? The answer could only be either another Sunni, who most likely would come from Hussein's Ba'th party, or a pluralist government representative of a diverse society. Those in the U.S. government uncomfortable with unknowns chose to keep Hussein in power, since this represented the least-worst option.

Containment with the goal of regime change prevailed from 1991 until 1998. Running parallel to this effort was a CIA-backed (at times covert, and at other times clandestine) series of operations designed to bolster Iraqi opposition groups' attempts to

---

33 Sarah Graham-Brown, *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers,1999), 59.

34 Ibid, 60.

overthrow the Hussein regime. Each of the secret operations failed to gain widespread support and, more importantly, to overcome political and religious differences between the opposition groups themselves.

2.   Containment

Starting with Secretary of State Madeline Albright's speech at Georgetown University in 1997, U.S. policy toward Iraq began to shift toward 'containment plus.' Instead of waiting for sanctions to wear down Hussein's regime, Albright strongly backed U.S. support for "the establishment of a coherent and united Iraqi opposition which represents the country's ethnic and confessional diversity."[35] Albright's speech, although direct, did little to change the meager support the opposition groups received. The neo-conservatives wanted more action. Paul Wolfowitz, at the time the dean at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, argued in front of the House Committee on International Relations in early 1998 that support for opposition groups had resulted in no serious action. He said, "For all the talk about opposing Saddam, for all the talk about supporting the opposition, the United States has yet to deliver a single rifle to the Iraqi opposition, much less the kind of anti-tank weaponry, for example, that could be a real equalizer for them."[36] The neo-conservatives were going to have to force U.S. policy. It became clear to them that to muster support for an opposition movement, they would need President Clinton's backing.

B.   THE DOWNING PLAN: A PRECURSOR TO THE ILA

In Iraq, meanwhile, the opposition groups were all but destroyed by Hussein's military. In 1991, the United States apparently unwittingly permitted Hussein the use of his helicopters which he used to destroy a growing opposition in southern Iraq. In 1995, with the help of the CIA, opposition groups attempted to join together against Hussein's Republic Guard in northern Iraq. The United States decided not to support this attempt

---

35 Madeleine Albright, "Policy Speech on Iraq at Georgetown University" (March 26, 1997), http://www.fas.org (accessed September 20, 2005).

36 Paul Wolfowitz, "U.S. Options in Confronting Iraq." Hearing Before the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 105th Congress (February 25, 1998), http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/congress/ 1998_h/hfa48782_0.htm/ (accessed December 10, 2005).

with air power.[37] By 1996, after infighting between Kurdish opposition groups weakened their dissident effort, Hussein sent tanks into northern Iraq. Hundreds of opposition fighters were killed and the groups were forced to relocate to London.

What eventually became apparent was that if opposition groups were going to succeed, they were going to need substantial aid from America. Retired General Wayne Downing was one of the first proponents for military aid to the opposition in early 1998. He had combat experience in Vietnam, led the mission to find Manuel Noriega in Panama, and was responsible for the scud hunt in the Persian Gulf War. Closing in on retirement, Downing started to work with Ahmad Chalabi, the head of the Iraq National Congress (INC). The INC held its first conference in Geneva in June 1992, and by October of the same year became the umbrella organization for most of the opposition groups. The INC served as the single point of contact for the U.S. government.

Working with Downing to provide the INC with military advice was Dewey Clarridge. A retired CIA officer who served as the Chief of both the Latin America and European divisions and created the first CIA-based counterterrorism center, Clarridge, upon retirement, became a strong voice for a stronger foreign policy. Together, these two unconventional warfare experts developed a plan, and then, relying on years of experience working within government bureaucracies, looked for ways to implement it.

While Downing and Clarridge refined their plan, Richard Perle, David Wurmser, and Paul Wolfowitz, amongst others, provided the political muscle. Colleagues at the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), these three men drafted a letter to President Clinton in early 1998 with forty former government officials endorsing a U.S.-backed insurgency led by the INC to overthrow the Hussein regime. Citing failed coup attempts to remove Hussein and containment as ineffective, the letter urged Clinton to take new action against the regime. The recommendations were: 1) establish an exiled Iraqi government headed by the INC; 2) enhance the no-fly zones in northern Iraq and establish protected areas in southern Iraq; 3) lift sanctions in the liberated areas; 4) provide funds to the INC that were frozen by the United States and Britain during the Persian Gulf War; 5) establish a Free Iraq radio station; 6) aid the opposition both

---

37 Robert Baer, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002), 191-205.

militarily and logistically; 7) launch an air campaign against Iraq's military; and 8) establish a U.S. military presence in the area to assist the opposition government if necessary.[38] This letter later served as a template for Congress when it came to writing the ILA.

However, the proponents for change failed to convince Clinton to change tack, and therefore turned to a new tactic. Instead of working through the Executive, they allied themselves with Congressmen.

The executive branch traditionally plays the strongest role in determining foreign policy, but in this case Congress attempted to legislate it. The PNAC presented their plan to the Republican-controlled Congress and gained support. Chief among the advocates were Senators Lott (R-Miss.) McCain (R-Ariz.), Lieberman (D-Conn.), and Kerrey (D-Nebr.). While Congress accepted the Downing Plan, other agencies and departments within the government remained skeptical.

The CIA did not feel the INC was a credible organization and continued to work on other options, presumably coup attempts. At the same time, there was not a unified message coming out of DoS. Madeline Albright was one of the first open supporters of regime change using exiled opposition groups. But Martin Indyk, Assistant Secretary of State, Near Eastern Affairs, argued that the idea of U.S. military support to an opposition was not a "wise or a responsible policy."[39]

During this period, from 1997 to 1999, Clinton was fending off charges by Paula Jones of sexual misconduct and battling perjury charges stemming from testimony in the Monica Lewinsky case. Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein refused UN inspectors entry into Iraq and sanctions seemed to be losing international support. France and Russia began lobbying for a liberalizing of sanctions, and for the increased flow of oil out of Iraq.

C. THE IRAQ LIBERATION ACT: CONFUSION FROM THE BEGINNING

Nevertheless, six months after it was presented to Congress, the Downing Plan, in a scaled down form, had become law. The Iraq Liberation Act passed both the House

---

38 Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf, "Open Letter to the President (February 19, 1998), http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/ (accessed November 20, 2005).

39 Martin Indyk, "Overview of Middle East Policy—Question and Answer Session." *Council on Foreign Relations* (April 22, 1999), http://cfr.org/ (accessed November 10, 2005).

and Senate in October 1998. With bipartisan support in Congress, Clinton signed the ILA into law on October 31, 1998. While many lawmakers expected support for opposition groups to begin immediately, this did not occur. The ILA was vague and left room for interpretation. Before there could be agreement on how to support opposition groups there needed to be agreement on the situation in the Middle East. While these issues were being discussed, Clinton maintained control of foreign policy.

1. Disagreements Concerning the ILA: Its Affect on Iraq and the Region

Some officials regarded the Hussein regime as a destabilizing force in the region that, when given the chance, would act aggressively toward its neighbors. Others saw the sanctions working to effectively keep Hussein in his proverbial box.

Following the approval of the ILA, there was also disagreement about how the other countries in the region viewed American support for the opposition. Historically, Saudi Arabia is consulted on most moves the United States makes in the neighborhood. Passage of the ILA seemed to suggest otherwise. Saudi Arabia was worried that the opposition would cause instability in Iraq or bring a Shiite regime to power. In a meeting with Albright, Saudi officials said, "The Kingdom does not believe and does not support any foreign side to interfere in changing the ruling regime in Iraq because any such change should take place from within Iraq and by the people themselves."[40] Likewise, Turkey was hesitant to back any opposition effort for fear an independent Kurdish country would form as a result of Hussein's removal, further exacerbating Turkey's troubles with its own Kurdish population. Moreover, Turkey's Kurds might gain support if the U.S. armed Iraqi Kurds. Kenneth Pollack wrote in *Foreign Affairs,* "The Kuwaitis, the Saudis, the Jordanians, and the Turks adamantly oppose all rollback efforts that do not include the direct use of U.S. military power to ensure victory…"[41] Additionally, Russia, China, and France condemned any U.S. support of the opposition.[42]

---

40 Vernon Loeb, "General Wary of Plan to Arm Groups in Iraq," *Washington Post* (January 29, 1999), http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

41 Daniel Byman, Kenneth Pollack, and Gideon Rose, "The Rollback Fantasy." *Foreign Affairs* (January/February, 1999), http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

42 Daniel Byman, "All Talk, No Action May be Best with Iraq." *Washington Post* (January 2, 2000), http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed November 20, 2005).

2.   Interpreting the ILA

While Clinton seemed to have little choice whether to sign the ILA into law given his poor political backing at the time, he was able to maintain control over Iraq policy through specific wording in the law. The goal, as stated in the ILA, was "to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime."[43] Madeleine Albright had built in wiggle room two years earlier when she initially suggested that the President "*may* provide [support] to the Iraqi democratic opposition organizations…[emphasis added]."[44]

Nevertheless, the most striking difference in interpretation of the ILA was between Clinton and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.). Lott, before the Senate vote that approved the ILA, explained how he intended the ILA to support the removal of Hussein.

> Our vote in several moments is a strong demonstration of Congressional support for a new policy toward Iraq—a policy that overtly seeks the replacement of Saddam Hussein's regime through military and political support for the Iraq opposition….I think they [Clinton administration] are beginning to understand the strategic argument in favor of moving beyond containment to a policy of "rollback." Containment is not sustainable.[45]

In a statement following his signing of the ILA, Clinton made clear his objectives and how he planned to reach them.

> The United States wants Iraq to rejoin the family of nations as a freedom-loving and law-abiding member. This is in our interest and that of our allies within the region…. My Administration has pursued, and will continue to pursue, these objectives through active application of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions…. There are, of course, other important elements of U.S. policy. These include the maintenance of U.N. Security Council support efforts to eliminate Iraq's weapons and missile programs and economic sanctions that continue to deny the regime the means to reconstitute those threats to international

---

43 Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, Public Law 105-338. (October 31, 1998), http://www.findlaw.com/ (accessed November 17, 2005).

44 Iraq Liberation Act of 1998.

45 "Establishing a Program to Support a Transition to Democracy in Iraq." *The Library of Congress* (October 7, 1998), http://thomas.loc.gov/ (accessed November 17, 2005).

peace and security. United States support for the Iraqi opposition will be carried out consistent with those policy objectives as well. Similarly, U.S. support must be attuned to what the opposition can effectively make use of as it develops over time.[46]

Differences of opinion within the government did not stop with the President and Congress. While Lott saw the arming of the opposition as key to Hussein's downfall, Clinton was more in line with the U.N. resolutions and an incremental build-up of support for the opposition. Support would increase as the opposition showed itself to be: united and inclusive of all ethnicities and religions in Iraq; capable of organizing a strong, democratic opposition to Hussein; and, responsible enough to be armed by the U.S.

The commander of Central Command, in charge of all military forces in the Middle East, strongly disapproved of arming the Iraqi opposition. General Anthony Zinni thought such a move "could be very dangerous."[47] He continued to argue against Congress's plan.

> I've seen the effect of regime changes that didn't quite come about the way we would have liked. And the last thing we need is another rogue state. The last thing we need is a disintegrated, fragmented Iraq because the effects on the region would be far greater, in my mind, than a contained Saddam.[48]

Zinni, and most of DoD, also opposed the ILA because of where the funds for the opposition were going to have to come from. Up to $97 million in articles from the stocks of DoD and DoD services (transportation, training, schools, etc.) were to be made available for the opposition. Essentially, any radio or other piece of equipment given to the opposition was a radio taken out of the hands of a U.S. military member. A seat in any military school for an opposition member meant one less seat for an American. Given the zero-sum nature of budgets involving millions of dollars, the military was not excited to play. After complaining to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator

---

46 William Clinton, "The Iraq Liberation Act," *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary* (October 31, 1998), http://www.library.cornell.edu/ (accessed November 17, 2005).

47 Loeb.

48 Ibid.

John McCain (R-Ariz.) shot back at Zinni that it "happened to be a law that was passed and signed by the President of the United States."[49]

After the signing of the ILA, one DoS official commented about the opposition: "These are the day-after guys; they're not going to put a bullet in the head of Saddam Hussein."[50] Contradicting this view, Albright wrote in her memoir that she supported the ILA's goal of removing Saddam Hussein since he posed a threat to the security of the world, stating, "...I could not question the goal of ousting Saddam Hussein."[51] Recently she has contradicted her previous statements, arguing that sanctions alone were working and inferring that supporting an opposition movement was never necessary.[52]

As the Department directed to oversee the funding of the Iraqi opposition, DoS ran into problems even implementing the ILA. First, the opposition groups were not well situated to receive money. Because the ILA was federal law, DoS mandated that the groups meet strict requirements to receive U.S. funds. These included maintaining accounting records, opening bank accounts, and being incorporated. The INC took months to comply.

Other opponents of the ILA included Anthony Cordesman, a former defense official who was national security advisor to McCain and is now a director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA and NSC analyst and now a Professor at the National Defense University. Cordesman argued that backing an opposition with limited popular support in Iraq and in the region was dangerous. If a weak opposition engaged Hussein's military, the United States would be put in a position of having to protect its surrogates or risk a catastrophe.[53] Pollack argued that expecting the opposition to topple Hussein without substantial direct U.S. military

49 Loeb.

50 Heidi Kingstone, "Baghdad Dreaming." *The Jerusalem Report* (August 30, 1999), http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

51 Madeleine K. Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 287.

52 Tim Russert, *Meet the Press* (December 11, 2005), http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10364730/ (accessed December 11, 2005).

53 Anthony H. Cordesman, "U.S. Policy Toward Iraq." Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Subcommittee (March 1, 2001), http://www.iraqwatch.org/ (accessed December 10, 2005).

involvement was wishful thinking. The opposition had limited support within the country and no secure area from which to plan and launch a campaign.[54]

D.   BENEFACTORS OF THE ILA

Chalabi, the INC's politically savvy leader, often takes credit for engineering the ILA. Born in Iraq but raised in the United States and Britain, Chalabi had supposedly close ties with neo-conservative proponents of the ILA, most prominent among them being Wolfowitz and Richard Perle. He maneuvered to the leadership position of the INC during its early meetings and co-opted other opposition groups. Ironically, although he was the leader of the INC, Chalabi's most substantial support came from within America. His standing within Iraq was questionable.

Indeed, it appears Chalabi needed American support more than any of the other larger opposition groups. Because he had such limited support inside the country, he needed to offer other groups a reason to join his umbrella organization. In December 2001 Henry Barker, who served on the DoS's Policy Planning Staff from 1998 to 2000, said, "the INC today exists essentially in name only. There is no muscle behind Chalabi. Both the Kurds and the Shiites pay only the feeblest lip service to the group."[55]

Clinton tried to bolster the INC's credibility three times during his second term. First, ten days before signing the ILA, Clinton approved $8 million for the Iraqi opposition (INC) "to unify, work together more effectively, and articulate the aspirations of the Iraqi people…."[56] Second, he signed the ILA and looked to the INC as the single umbrella organization. And third, he offered Iraqis $12 million in humanitarian relief to be administered by the INC from northern Iraq. All of these measures were consistent with Clinton's vision of using the opposition groups as political forces, not forces for change.

While the INC benefited logistically from the ILA, other opposition groups that refused to fall under the umbrella group still gained legitimacy. The Iranian-based Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of only two Shiite groups

---

54 Byman, Pollack, and Rose.

55 Henri J. Barkey, "What Worked in Kabul Won't in Baghdad." *Washington Post* (December 9, 2001), http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

56 Clinton.

24

with ties to southern Iraq and in possession of a formidable military force (the other being al-Da'wa), boycotted ILA conferences. Other groups proved more eager to participate. Just over a year after the signing of the ILA more than 300 Iraqi dissidents met at a DoS sponsored conference. While SCIRI wanted to be seen as anti-American, other groups, like the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani, found U.S. support vital to success. He said, "Some say we look like puppets of the United States, but we are making independent decisions…. Without U.S. support, it is impossible to change the dictatorship."[57] In late 1998, Madeleine Albright brokered a peace between the two warring Kurdish factions, the PUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Massoud Barzani, making it possible for both groups to then join the INC. Given their considerable military strength, if either of the groups had refused, the legitimacy of the effort would have been severely damaged.

Overt U.S. support both aided and hurt the INC. There was the expectation that the INC would receive training, weapons, and logistical support from the United States, but at the same time, none of the exiles wanted to be seen as American pawns. Anti-American sentiment in Iraq was growing, especially in the south. After years of sanctions and an oil-for-food program that began to deliver food in March 1998 to an estimated sixty percent of the country's population, many Iraqi people blamed America for their suffering. Moreover, other countries in the region did not enlist to help the opposition groups, although no documented cases of thwarting them have been found.

E.   IMPLEMENTING THE ILA

With the ILA written to allow Clinton room to determine policy, it was not until November 1999, a year after the act was signed, that the INC received any aid. $2 million worth of drawdown equipment from DoD was authorized for the INC to set up a headquarters. The money was used for items such as computers, fax machines, and office space rent. Representative Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), chairman of the House International Relations Committee, attacked this use of drawdown funds, stating "I can't

---

57 Katharine Q. Seelye, "Differences Within U.S. Government on Display at New York Meeting of 300 Iraqi Opposition Leaders." *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (February 28, 2000), http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed November 10, 2005).

imagine that Saddam Hussein would be worried about being overthrown by Iraqi exiles trained in civil affairs brandishing fax machines."[58]

The second expenditure was for INC members to receive five types of training outlined by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs: leadership; management and administrative training for setting up a civil society; human rights and peacekeeping; basic legal approaches to setting up a democracy; and political opposition skills.[59]

Chalabi, along with Congressional supporters of the ILA, was not encouraged by the slow start to the program or the content of the training. Supporters expected one of two options to be implemented: 1) The Downing Plan—calling for the training and equipping of guerrilla leaders by U.S. Special Forces units with the goal of building up a sizable force in southern Iraq to move to Baghdad, supported by U.S. air power; or, 2) The Lott Plan—use air power to restrict all Iraqi military movement, both air and ground, in the southern region, providing the opposition a staging and training location for Iraqi defectors with the goal of marching to Baghdad.[60]

Each of these rollback plans called for extensive U.S. military force and depended on a formidable opposition force. For this the INC would need to recruit a large force within the country, something considered difficult because if Hussein did attack the opposition, the United States would have to make a decision similar to the one President John F. Kennedy made vis-à-vis Cuban exiles prior to the Bay of Pigs. Of course, the INC would also have to convince the Shiites in the south that the Americans were in fact going to support the opposition this time, despite the fact that in 1991 the United States refused to.

1.   Bureaucratic Slowdown: Unresolved Issues

Beyond the politics of implementation, there were bureaucratic concerns. A senior DoD official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he experienced a myriad of problems exercising the ILA. Although he received guidance from the Clinton

---

58 Seeyle.

59 Kenneth Bacon, "DoD News Briefing." Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (October 28, 1999), http://www.fas.org/ (accessed September 6, 2005).

60 Byman, Pollack, and Rose provide a detailed analysis of the three offensive plans.

administration to set up a pilot program to help the INC organize and test its capabilities, combat training was not authorized until the INC was found to be responsible and organized. DoD asked for an office address which to send computers and other administrative equipment. It took months for the INC to provide an address. It became clear that "the INC was never interested in computers, they just wanted guns."[61]

Other problems emerged. How was DoD going to ship weapons and supplies into Iraq? With UN sanctions restricting anything but humanitarian supplies, nothing short of UN approval would suffice. (DoD never figured out how to ship weapons into Iraq.) As training became available, DoD asked for the INC to provide a list of trainees. Months later, a list of INC members was received, but instead of including people from all of the opposition groups, the list only included names of INC loyalists. Furthermore, the INC members were from all over the Middle East. They needed visas, medical and dental screening, and an English language test. U.S. embassies in these areas were not set up to process such an influx of people, and hence, months were lost. Also, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) normally handles tasks like these, but they traditionally work with other countries, not sub-state entities. Again, months were lost before the DSCA put together training programs in human rights, public affairs, and communications by setting up internet sites.

Making it more difficult to get training programs started was the uniformed military's overall opposition to supporting the ILA. There was a general consensus that the opposition groups would drag the U.S. military into a fight that the services were not prepared for.[62] Bogged down with bureaucratic problems, DoD did not even get to the question of what a new regime in Iraq would mean for the country. Would the Kurds and Shiites want autonomy? How would Turkey and Iran react?

Thus, while politicians and government officials were pushing Clinton to act, one of the implementing agencies, DoD, was still struggled with logistics. Overwhelmed and somewhat confused, a DoD official involved with the program admitted, "I'm not really sure what we [DoD] were trying to do."[63]

---

61 Personal interview.

62 Personal interview.

63 Ibid.

F.   EXILES, FUTURE CONFLICTS, AND LEGISLATION

Although every opposition group and situation will be different, a few universal lessons can be drawn from the ILA experience. First, while the final goal of the ILA was clear—a democratic state compliant to international norms—the steps to reach this point, and at a minimum, a consensus on the threat Hussein had become to his people, the region, and the world, were not universally shared. Second, before enacting the ILA, there is no record of Congress considering the reaction in the Middle East to the U.S. training opposition forces. Support from the international community, specifically the Gulf region states and the UNSC, is vital.

Third, the executive branch is largely responsible for implementing foreign policy. Congressional efforts in this case, while within Congress's mandate, were a wasted effort because the President did not agree with the policy. From the time Albright gave her speech in March 1997, until Clinton left office in January 2001, the opposition received minimal support. Although the ILA was passed legislation, Clinton maintained control of foreign policy and slowed support to the INC.

Fourth, the policy to remove Saddam Hussein and support opposition groups was never coherent. Bureaucratic friction between DoD, DoS, CIA, Congress, the President, think tanks, and lobbyists seemed insurmountable and proved damaging when more trained exiles could have been useful to U.S. forces in Iraq. In addition to domestic challenges, international legal restrictions inhibited the ILA. The ILA was not crafted well enough to overcome what at the time were unforeseen international legal restrictions. Therefore, the necessary political maneuvering was not accomplished to ensure that the United States would be able to support exiles under current international restrictions.

Although exiles have unique capabilities, before they can be used, an overwhelming number of hurdles need to be overcome. While the ILA is viewed at best as a poorly implemented plan that had great potential and at worst a pernicious model for future legislation, it is clear that only well crafted legislation created at the request of the President will enable the U.S. government to overcome bureaucratic challenges in order for the military to utilize exiles.

III.   FREE IRAQI FORCES

With Clinton out of office and President George W. Bush surrounding himself with many of the original backers of the ILA, it was believed that the opposition would finally receive the military training they had called for. In contrast, during the first eight months in office, Bush did not bolster support for the exiles. Not until after al Qaeda operatives attacked America on September 11, 2001, and Bush made his 'Axis of Evil' speech, did the U.S. government dust off the ILA.

Following the quick defeat in 2001 of the Taliban by Special Operations Forces (SOF) supported by U.S. air power and the Northern Alliance, the Downing Plan was reassessed. Could the Iraqi opposition supported by SOF and air power defeat Hussein? Michael Dobbs, writing for the *Washington Post,* described Wolfowitz and other appointees as supporters of the plan, while the DoS, CIA, and professional military argued that the plan gave too much credit to the opposition in Iraq.[64] "Military analysts pointed out that the Iraqi army was nearly 20 times the size of the Taliban force, with 10 times as many tanks."[65]

From the signing of the ILA in 1998 until 2002, approximately $1 million of the original $97 million had been spent.[66] Only 140 opposition members received training, and the INC had little to show for its efforts.[67] In December of 2002 the Bush administration revamped the ILA. Adding six new opposition groups to the existing seven under the INC, Bush called for the groups to submit lists of potential trainees. Furthermore, Bush released the remaining $96 million.

However, this money was not spent training guerrillas to fight Hussein, but instead went to training Iraqi exiles in civil-military operations (CMO) and supporting a

---

64 Michael Dobbs, "Old Strategy on Iraq Sparks New Debate; Backers Say Plan Proven in Afghanistan," *Washington Post* (December 27, 2001), http://www.proquest.com (accessed October 11, 2005).

65 Ibid.

66 Philip T. Reeker, "Daily Press Briefing." U.S. Department of State (December 10, 2002), http://www.state.gov (accessed December 5, 2005).

67 Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest: Joint Report to Congress, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (May 2003), http://www.state.gov (accessed December 6, 2005).

last minute effort to build a stand-alone exile-based fighting unit. The programs were a part of an interesting experiment. The CMO program was short-lived and received little attention as the United States geared up for war. The fighting unit was an afterthought, pulled together and employed in a matter of days after the war began. Although each program experienced limited success, neither altered the course of the war.

Supporters of the ILA in 1998 blame the difficulties the United States faces in Iraq today on the poor implementation of their plan to utilize the INC offensively. Richard Perle, appointed by President George Bush as the chairman of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee, testified to Congress about the importance of exiles.

> With thousands of Iraqis [exiles] at our side, we might well have dealt more effectively with the turmoil and looting that followed the collapse of the regime and we might have jump-started the transition to an emerging Iraqi democracy.[68]

Thousands of trained exiles may have made a difference, but in general the conventional U.S. military was neither prepared nor capable of fighting alongside the exiles unless they had trained together, and of course, training with ground forces for future combined operations was never the plan. Chalabi, in an interview in 2002, described how the exiles might have helped DoD. "We [INC] need training of light, mobile anti-tank units—not many, six battalions in the south and six battalions in the north…" He continued, "We also need to train maybe 5,000 military police…that can be the nucleus of a police force in Iraq as the land war progresses….But there is a ban on lethal training."[69]

A. RECRUITING THE EXILES: LAST MINUTE EFFORTS

The crowd chanted "down, down, Saddam!" and "yes, yes, George!" as Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz smiled upon the more than three hundred Shiite Iraqi-Americans gathered in Dearborn, Michigan, for a town hall meeting. More than a meeting to build political support for regime change in Iraq, Wolfowitz had a mission:

---

68 Richard Perle, "Four Broad Lessons from Iraq." Testimony, House Committee on Armed Services (April 7, 2005), http://www.aei.org (accessed December 5, 2005).

69 Bruce Stokes, "Ahmed Chalabi: Help Us Liberate Iraq," *National Journal* (July 13, 2002), http://www.cfr.org (accessed December 9, 2005).

recruit Iraqi-Americans to support the U.S. military if President Bush made the decision to remove Saddam Hussein by force.

As history has shown, his attempt to recruit Iraqi-Americans, and Iraqi exiles in general, to support the U.S. war effort fell well below the expectations of DoD. Wolfowitz admitted his failure in an interview six months after the United States entered Iraq, saying, "We tried very hard before the war to do the one thing that might have made the difference, and that was to train free Iraqi forces. If there's one thing I wish we had more of, it was more Iraqis trained before the war."[70]

Before the war the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) viewed utilizing Iraqi exiles to bridge the cultural gap, break down language barriers, and spread the "right" message to the Iraqi population as vital to the American effort. For failing to build a more robust exile program, Wolfowitz blames the perceived conflict between training exiles and the ongoing diplomatic approach to dismantle Hussein's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).[71]

The U.S. military today arguably continues to have a limited capability to adapt to what many refer to as "cultural terrain." The ability to work within a population is more critical than any new weapon or ideology that will bring down an insurgency. As the 2005 "Defense Language Transformation Roadmap" states "Language skill and regional expertise are not valued as Defense core competencies yet they are as important as critical weapons systems."[72] There are an estimated 350,000 Iraqis—either naturalized U.S. citizens or holders of green cards—in the United States, yet military leaders and policy makers continue to request cultural knowledge specialists.

This chapter analyzes whether exile forces, specifically the Free Iraqi Forces (FIF) embedded with U.S. military units in Iraq, were, or could have been, effective tools in a counterinsurgency mission. To draw any lasting insight from the analysis, a thorough historical account of the FIF is necessary.

---

70 Paul Wolfowitz, "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with the Jerusalem Post." Interview with Janine Zacharia, *Jerusalem Post* (September 22, 2003), http://www.defenselink.mil/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=3173 (accessed September 6, 2005).

71 Ibid.

72 Department of Defense, "Defense Language Transformation Roadmap," (2005), http://www.defense.gov (accessed August 30, 2005).

B.   THE INITIAL CALL-UP

In June 2002, the Army tasked Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to train up to 5,000 Iraqi exiles to serve as guides, translators, and experts on civil affairs. With no historical precedent in Army history, a TRADOC unit prepared to train a para-military force.   Normally this is a mission for Army Special Forces.   Conventional soldiers from 31 units (primarily reservist drill instructors, Officer Candidate School instructors, and civil affairs soldiers) received vague instructions that they were to prepare a short course of instruction and the details would be forthcoming.

While the ad hoc organization under TRADOC developed a training program, OSD alerted Iraqi opposition groups to submit names of volunteers to join the exile program named the FIF. The funding for the program came from the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (ILA) signed by President Clinton, which allows the President, if he desires, to support opposition groups that are committed to democratic values and to the respect of human rights. President Bush designated twelve groups under the ILA on December 9, 2002.[73]

Thousands of names were submitted over the following months. The opposition groups seemed to be competing to show DoD who had the broadest base of support from within the exile community. One exile interviewed received calls from five different groups looking for volunteers. A few groups turned in their lists with corresponding biographical data as well as copies of visas to assist in background checks, but this was the exception.

Ghalib Bradosti, a representative for a Kurdish opposition group, presented seventy names to OSD; six people were approved to begin training six months later. Each name went through an interagency approval process involving DoS, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the CIA, among others. Of the approximately five thousand names received, OSD selected seventy-eight Iraqi exiles to undergo training.[74]

---

[73] George W. Bush, Presidential Determination No. 2003-05 (December 9, 2002); and, George W. Bush, Presidential Determination No. 2003-06 (December 9, 2002).

[74] James D. Doyle, "Mission Overview, Free Iraqi Forces" (presented to Task Force Warrior on April 26, 2003; available at Fort Leavenworth as a reference in On Point).

Rumored to have been promised by opposition group leaders a paycheck of $3-4,000 a month, the members of the FIF were actually paid a stipend of a little over a $1,000 a month.

The majority of volunteers were Shiite Muslims belonging to the Iraqi National Congress, with minimal numbers of Sunnis, Kurds, and Christians participating. The majority were bilingual and about two-thirds had some form of previous military training.

C.   TASZAR, HUNGARY: WHERE ARE ALL OF THE RECRUITS?

With the lack of vetted students ready for training, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) dramatically lowered its expectations. The JCS originally envisioned the FIF being composed of an Infantry Battalion, a Military Police (MP) Company, and a Civil-Military Operations (CMO) Company.[75] Instead, a CMO force with a very limited MP capability to be parceled out singly or in pairs to U.S. units would be created.

Instructors arrived in Taszar, Hungary, late in January 2003. They received orders to stay in Hungary for 179 days, and if needed, they could be extended. Although shrouded in secrecy—the instructors were not even told that Iraqis exiles would be their students until December 2002—the BBC, Al Jazeera, and the American television networks were allowed limited access to the training. Taszar was chosen over Ft. Bliss, Texas, based on an assessment by DoD, which cautioned that volunteers from Europe and elsewhere might claim political asylum upon arrival in America.[76]

Once the fifty-three students arrived, less than a week later, all the parts of Task Force Warrior were in place. But one more security check remained. Although multiple agencies conducted an initial background check in the United States, DoD conducted a three-hour polygraph session as well as a more detailed background check for each student arriving in Taszar.

The conditions at "Camp Freedom," the part of the air base the United States used for training, were considered "better than usual" by the instructors. The rooms were spartan, but clean, and Internet, satellite television (tuned to either Al Jazeera or CNN), and a well-stocked dining facility rounded out the amenities. No one was allowed to

---

75 Doyle, 6.

76 Ibid.

consume alcohol and the students were restricted from leaving base. Hungarian defense officials mandated this restriction to allay fears that the training could leave Taszar vulnerable to terrorist attacks.[77] The fifty-person instructor staff, the Task Force Warrior staff, and the 700-person artillery battalion out of Ft. Bragg, North Carolina (deployed solely for force protection), rotated passes to go out into town.

At the beginning of training, with only fifty-three students, the instructors assumed that the "flood gates" would be opened for the second class. Senior Task Force Warrior officials never informed the instructors that the numbers might not improve.

D.   TRAINING BEGINS

The three-week training program consisted of two sections: basic military skills, and civil-military operations. The basic military skills training instructed trainees on basic pistol marksmanship (for use in self-defense only), basic military etiquette to include drilling, and the donning of a chemical-biological protection mask and clothing. The civil-military operations training was built around a series of lectures and practical exercises, culminating in a two-day Civil Military Operations Center simulation.[78]

One instructor, who agreed to be interviewed under the condition of anonymity, thought the training did not go as smoothly as anticipated. First, because of secrecy and the change in training emphasis, most of the planning was done after instructors arrived at Camp Freedom. Second, there was a language barrier with some of the students. Although Task Force Warrior hired translators from Titan, Inc. to convert all of the instructors' slides into Arabic, it was a humiliating failure. The translators changed everything into modern Arabic, not Iraqi Arabic. For example, during one brief on firing range safety, the slide originally said "fields of fire," but was translated to "burn the fields." Third, the age of the volunteers ranged from eighteen to fifty-nine. In some instances, the basic military skills instructors were afraid some of the older recruits were going to, in their words, "drop dead."

Eight days before the first class of volunteers graduated, the JCS authorized Major General Dave Barno, the commanding officer of TRADOC and the senior officer

---

77 Stefan Bos, "Hungary Agrees to Allow Military Training For Iraqi Exiles." *Palestine Chronicle* (December 18, 2003), http://www.proquest.com (accessed September 6, 2005).

78 Bos.

at Camp Freedom, to send almost half of the CMO instructors with the graduating class to Kuwait. The Marines—with no CMO training—who were supposed to escort the volunteers to their future CMO units never arrived in Taszar. The remaining escorts from the Florida Army National Guard, trained as artillery forward observers, arrived late and were given a special course in Civil Affairs before departing with the first group of FIF.[79]

Before the first FIF graduating class departed Taszar, the second class had already arrived. In early March 2003, twenty-three European-Iraqis began training.

E.   THE FIF IS OPERATIONAL

The Advanced Echelon team in Kuwait prepared all of the logistics for the arriving FIF soldiers. On March 5, 2003, fifty-three FIF soldiers were whisked under the cover of darkness from the Kuwait International Airport to their future units. Split between 1-MEF, V Corps, and the 352nd Civil Affairs Command, the FIF soldiers began to demonstrate their unique skills. The FIF soldiers were assigned to units that planned to operate near their hometowns so the soldiers' unique cultural knowledge and contacts with locals could be utilized.

Army Brigadier General John Kern, the commander of the 352nd Civil Affairs Command, used the FIF soldiers under his command in southern Iraq to interface with local leaders. The basic needs of the locals were quickly assessed and the necessary provisions were provided. Furthermore, the FIF soldiers were able to inform a distrustful population that the goal of the United States was to depose President Saddam Hussein. Until this message was passed by the FIF, the Iraqis in many towns did not welcome the American forces.[80] Kern remarked, "There's an automatic trust built in with local Iraqis when they see FIF members working alongside U.S. civil affairs units."[81]

Stephen Hayes, a reporter embedded with the FIF in Umm Qasr, saw the FIF affect the war effort in many valuable ways. The FIF members reassured the population

---

79 Doyle, 15.

80 John Kern, "Briefing With Free Iraqi Force Members," (April 10, 2003), http://www.globalsecurity.org (accessed January 21, 2006).

81 Gerry J. Gilmore, "Free Iraqi Forces: 'Members of the Team' Liberating Iraq." *American Forces Information Service* (April 10, 2003), http://www.defenselink.mil (accessed October 27, 2005).

that food and water was en route, helped U.S. forces compile a list of Ba'th party members, offered information on extensive hidden bunkers, and educated American soldiers about Islam.[82]

Master Sergeant Frank Kapaun, a former Special Forces soldier turned military policeman, was one of the first Americans to work with the FIF in Iraq. When asked about the FIF members he worked with, he said, "You could not buy the assets and intelligence, all of the benefits we were getting out of them. Their interviews yielded time-sensitive, real-world intelligence."[83]

F.   NORTHERN IRAQ OPERATIONS

The most successful FIF operations never received media coverage. Four Kurdish members of the FIF and three CMO officers arrived in Irbil on April 7, 2003. Ghalib Bradosti, the son of a Kurdish tribal leader, after numerous phone calls with senior officials within OSD, received his mission: Contact the commanders of the thirteen Republican Guard units surrounding Mosoul, and relay a message from OSD. Those who wish to surrender could do so without reprisal, except if they had committed war crimes.[84]

The small unit flew into an airfield in Bashur (approximately seventy-five miles north of Kirkuk). Because they were on such a compressed timeline, no coordination had been made with American units in the area. The group made initial contact with Americans, but none of them were prepared to supply any support. Bradosti, having left Iraq in 1992, still had contacts in the area. He conjured up vehicles, food and water, security from his father's tribal militia, and lodging at his family's home for the unit. The tribal leaders in the area, using their networks, carried Bradosti's message to Republic Guard commanders who wanted to surrender. Hundreds of Iraqis subsequently laid down their arms.

---

82 Stephen F. Hayes, "An Emotional Homecoming for the Free Iraqi Forces" *The Weekly Standard* Volume 008, issue 30 (April 14, 2003), http://www.weeklystandard.com/ (accessed September 1, 2005).

83 Hayes.

84 Information gathered during an interview with Ghalib Bradosti, and confirmed in "Mission Overview, Free Iraqi Forces," produced by Task Force Warrior.

After accomplishing their primary mission, the FIF unit "provided valuable intelligence to the 10th Special Forces, conducted assessments," and drafted contracts between local merchants and the U.S. units for necessary services.[85] Five days after arriving in northern Iraq, the FIF unit returned to Kuwait. Bradosti remained in Irbil working for the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion.

G.   THE FINAL DAYS OF THE FIF

The second FIF group of twenty-three European Iraqis integrated into the American units much as had the first group. There would not be a third group. Although U.S. military commanders were requesting more FIF soldiers, the program was terminated. Because many in positions of senior leadership believed that the war was close to concluding, they did not see another class adding any value.[86]

In mid April, the U.S. soldiers attached to the FIF departed Kuwait. At the same time, the instructors at Camp Freedom packed their bags and returned to their units. Barno submitted a proposal to keep the program running by contracting out the instructor cadre, but this plan was turned down by OSD.[87]   By late April the program was disbanded.

H.   COUNTERINSURGENCY IMPLICATIONS

The FIF brought unique skills to American units during the first two months of the war. The forces were not used in counterinsurgency operations, but the operations they conducted could be transferred to a counterinsurgency effort.

In May 2005, *Military Review* published Kalev Sepp's article "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency."[88] Combing through fifty-three insurgencies during the last century, Sepp selects the best and worst counterinsurgency practices. The first two practices essential to defeating an insurgency are to emphasize intelligence and to focus the overall effort on the needs and security of the population.

---

85 Doyle, 64.

86 Will Dunham, "U.S. Dispatches Iraq Exiles to Help Relief Effort," *Reuters* (April 10, 2003), http://www.kurd.org/ (accessed October 10, 2005).

87 Doyle.

88 Kalev Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency." *Military Review* (May 2005), www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/sepp.pdf (accessed July 3, 2006).

The FIF did not have counterinsurgency training, but the soldiers of the unit, along with the CMO personnel, knew that to be successful they needed to engage the population. The FIF experiment displayed that with their language skills, familial and tribal ties, and local area knowledge, exiles can be a vital asset to successful counterinsurgency operations. Additionally, the FIF was initially viewed as a tool to convince Iraqis that U.S. efforts in their country were for liberation, not occupation. By putting an "Iraqi face" with the U.S. military, as well as personnel able to communicate with the population, DoD hoped to limit anti-American sentiment. Although the FIF did accomplish this where they had a presence, were not large enough to have a broad, lasting impact.

If the competition between insurgents and the U.S. forces in Iraq is for support from the population, the population must have a connection to the coalition. The FIF provided that connection. The FIF was vetted carefully to ensure quality even at a cost of having limited numbers. The chain-of-command was truncated and the soldiers were given autonomy to work in small units separated from large conventional forces.

I. LOOKING BACK

The FIF program can be viewed as a success and as a failure. The FIF contributed to the effort in Iraq in measurable ways, but they did not directly affect the outcome. U.S. taxpayers spent more than $63 million to train sixty-nine exiles to serve less than two months in Iraq.[89] Furthermore, limited institutional knowledge seems to have been gained from the FIF program. The successes are too novel to use as a basis to develop a template for future programs. Moreover, current U.S. military doctrine does not reflect the successes and failures of the program.

DoD planned on training 3,000 FIF soldiers, yet ended up training about two percent of this goal. This failure needs to be addressed in the future. Although most might blame the vetting process, compensation also led to low turnout. Unlike a U.S. soldier, the FIF members did not have any insurance—most carriers disqualify policyholders in a war zone. Moreover, $1,000 a month is not enough to compensate for work performed in Iraq considering the sums required to support families and households

---

89 Department of Defense, Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide (2003), http://www.fas.org/asmp/profiles/aid/fy2003supp1/03-DoD.pdf (accessed October 29, 2005).

the United States and Europe. In many cases, Iraqi exiles chose instead to work for Titan or SAIC as interpreters, given larger salaries and more robust benefits.

Also, the original plan, which called for autonomous FIF units, needs to be evaluated in light of the successful embedding of individuals into U.S. units. The amount of training necessary to embed an exile into an already trained unit is drastically less than what is required to build an exile unit from scratch. We will see this, too, in the next chapter. The FIFF consisted of exiles as well, but exile assembled into entire companies. Army Special Forces initially escorted the companies, which were eventually disbanded after being charged with looting in Baghdad.

In sum, the FIF was an ad hoc organization that had mixed results, but did show that exiles can have a positive effect on a war effort if they are used both prudently and creatively.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

IV.   THE FREE IRAQI FIGHTING FORCES

Two weeks after the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom four Army Special Forces (SF) A-Teams sped toward the southern Iraqi town of Nasiriyah. Their tactical vehicles bristling with weapons, the Green Berets were not exactly sure what mission awaited them. Pulling into a bombed-out air base outside of Basra they almost fired upon their future charges with devastating force. Before them were approximately 500 Iraqis. Fortunately, the A-Teams located a small American military contingent intermingled with the Iraqis from whom they received their mission: Use these Iraqis to "put an Iraqi face on combat operations."[90]

Senior members of the Pentagon always understood that an "Iraqi face" was important during the occupation, but never anticipated needing Iraqis on the side of the Americans during combat operations. Contrary to CIA expectations, Iraqi units in the south did not capitulate, and instead fought tenaciously using irregular tactics. The first Marine killed in action died at the hands of a soldier in civilian dress firing an AK-47 out of a pick-up truck. U.S. forces confronted roadside bombs and suicide attacks launched by Fedayeen and foreign fighters.[91]   Given a foe different than expected, and undermanned given the growing power vacuum, CENTCOM, in a rare flare of adaptivity, looked for an irregular solution.

On March 27, 2003, General John Abizaid, deputy CENTCOM commander, spoke briefly with Colonel Ted Seel, his liaison to Ahmad Chalabi. Located in Kurdistan, Seel had crossed the Turkish border with Chalabi weeks earlier. The Colonel submitted daily reports to CENTCOM headquarters on the INC's capabilities, but there was never a plan to use INC forces. Now, with limited U.S. troops to handle a budding insurgency, and Abizaid's belief that Americans would be an "antibody" in Iraqi society, Chalabi was asked to provide his forces to the Americans. He quickly accepted, but only

---

90 Personal interview.

91 Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 500.

if he could lead the force. Abizaid strongly opposed the U.S. military supporting a future Iraqi politician. Wolfowitz overruled his objection.[92]

Days later, General Tommy Franks, CENTCOM commander, briefed the White House on Chalabi's new role in combating the Fedayeen fighters. It was the first time Frank Miller, the senior National Security Council deputy for defense issues, had heard of the plan.[93] Following the brief, Miller queried the CIA director, George Tenet, assuming he was familiar with this new FIFF program. The director replied tersely, "I have no fucking idea."[94] Secretary of State Colin Powell, similarly, was left in the dark.

While the FIFF was a complete surprise to both the CIA and DoS, a framework for the program, as well as funding for an exile unit, had existed for five years. Surprisingly, DoS was the administrator of the funding, of which the INC received $340,000 a month.[95] The authors of the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act—legislation that approved U.S. support to Iraqi opposition groups—envisioned a robust Iraqi exile unit capable of overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Instead, the exile combat unit came together through an "extraordinary improvisation."[96]

A.   MAKE-UP OF THE FIFF

The FIFF was organized within days for two principal reasons. First, the other exile program, the Free Iraqi Force (FIF) trained in civil affairs operations, was substantially smaller than expected. The "Iraqi face" that senior Pentagon officials believed vital was not being shown. Iraqis viewed Americans as occupiers instead of liberators. Because U.S. forces were not well received by Iraqis, specifically in urban areas, it was believed that having native Iraqi units "work the cities" would help pacify

---

92 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (2006), 316.

93 Ibid, 500.

94 Ibid.

95 Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 280.

96 Gordon and Trainor, "The Struggle for Iraq: Strategy; Dash to Baghdad Left U.S. Generals Divided," *New York Times* (March 13, 2006), http://www.nytimes.com (accessed March 13, 2006).

the population. Second, General Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the FIFF would "become basically the core of the new Iraqi army once Iraq is free."[97]

B.   BUILDING A PROGRAM FROM SCRATCH

In early March 2003, more than 1,000 men congregated in northern Iraq. Their backgrounds varied.   Some were former Republican Guard soldiers or Kurdish peshmerga. Others were returning exiles from America, Canada, Iran, Syria, and Jordon. The volunteers, rallying around Chalabi, were "neither screened nor trained."[98] Most did not speak English, about half had prior military experience, and with few exceptions, the men were Shiites.

Details of how the recruiting worked remain murky, but it is commonly viewed as having been Chalabi-centric. Of the 1,000 Iraqis who reported for duty in northern Iraq, only 600 were flown south to meet their handlers. And although 600 arrived in Nasiriya, only 331 were initially given arms and formed into fighting elements.[99] To add more confusion to the numbers and make-up of the participants, one SF team commander in charge of a quarter of the FIFF said that Chalabi solicited yet more new recruits using the local Nasiriyah radio stations. Volunteers showing up in taxis ready to join the FIFF were quickly accepted.[100] Although Chalabi expected thousands of recruits, the number of FIFF soldiers armed and in uniform never exceeded 500.

C.   A FAILED INFORMATION OPERATION

After waiting anxiously to shape the "new" Iraq, yet never expecting to work for the U.S. government, Chalabi and his fighters were flown in U.S. C-17 cargo planes to Tallil air base outside Basra. No one greeted the men at the air base. The SF soldiers would arrive hours later, surprised to see Chalabi. His presence, fought by Abizaid but

---

97 Bradley Graham, "U.S. Airlifts Iraqi Exile Force for Duties Near Nasiriyah," *Washington Post* (April 7, 2003), http://www.washingtonpost.com/ (accessed August 30, 2005).

98 Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (2006), 316; and, Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (2004), 278.

99 Linda Robinson, "Giving the War a More Iraqi Face," *U.S. News and World Report* (April 21, 2003), http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

100 Personal interview.

approved by Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz, would taint the FIFF until its dismantling. The Iraqi people, as well as portions of the U.S. government, viewed the emerging FIFF with skepticism. Chalabi, living outside Iraq for forty years, received mixed support from Iraqis. In one southern city he was greeted by thousands of supporters. In Baghdad support for Chalabi in 2003 was minimal. Considered an interloper at best and an American lackey at worst, in polls he received support from approximately 30 percent of the population.[101]

Support for Chalabi outside of Iraq was just as divided. Within the U.S. government the CIA and DoS viewed Chalabi with suspicion and any U.S. role in promoting him in Iraq was considered dangerous.[102] The CIA believed the FIFF to be filled with "unreliable mercenaries" and "a time bomb that could blow up in CENTCOM's face."[103] Moreover, senior military officers did not support the FIFF, the INC, or Chalabi.[104] While Franks and Abizaid supported the overall plan, General David McKiernan, the land force commander for all of Iraqi, "was blindsided…and saw Chalabi's fighters as an unwanted burden."[105] The lack of consensus within the U.S. government manifested itself in a program hindered from the start.

D.   PREPARING THE FIFF FOR OPERATIONS

Even with SF advisors the FIFF was not completely supported. The senior SF officer in Kurdistan, Colonel Charlie Cleveland, gathered the FIFF volunteers and shuttled them south. Calling the FIFF a "political nicety but a worthless unit," he spent little time coordinating logistical support.[106] The short shrift he gave the FIFF is understandable. Cleveland was tasked with securing northern Iraq with fifty A-Teams in place of 60,000 conventional soldiers denied access through Turkey.

101 Christopher Dickey, "The Master Operator," *Newsweek* (March 8, 2006).

102 Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 57.

103 Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor*, Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (2006), 316.

104 Ibid. See also: Warren P. Strobel and John Walcott, "Post-War Planning Non-Existent," *Knight Ridder Newspapers* (October 17, 2004).

105 Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (2006), 317.

106 Personal interview.

Despite a myriad of shortcomings, the SF teams charged with training, advising, and generally assisting the FIFF bore the burden of inept planning and limited support fairly well. One SF officer likened the experience to an Arabic "Robin Sage" exercise.[107] This was what SF was designed to do: work by, through, and with locals. What the SF soldiers were not used to was limited logistical support.

Members of the 101st Airborne Division dropped large crates of weapons at the air base. Confiscated AK-47s and Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) launchers tumbled dangerously out of the boxes. Once each fighter had a weapon and two magazines, they were broken into four companies of 100 to 160 men each.

Chalabi handpicked the Iraqi company commanders for their political loyalty, not for their military expertise. Aras Karem Habib, Chalabi's operations chief, assumed overall command of the FIFF. When asked by reporters he admitted his expertise lay in civil engineering, not military operations.[108] Once the men had been organized into companies and tested their weapons at the firing range they were ready to go to work, although getting a unit the size of the FIFF ready for combat within three days was unprecedented in SF's history. The FIFF was tasked with an overwhelmingly broad mission in the south: augment American forces in urban areas and gather intelligence. Used to operating in difficult situations with little guidance, the SF soldiers valiantly attempted what many considered impossible.

E.   OPERATION CRESCENT RISING

In issued "chocolate chip" fatigues and wearing a distinct FIFF patch—making the FIFF members combatants under the Geneva Conventions—this exile-filled combat unit prepared to fight Hussein's remnant security forces. The FIFF required more than uniforms though. However, their SF advisors still lacked logistical support.[109] While they had their own vehicles, food, water, and ammo, they did not carry nearly enough for the FIFF. Loading the Iraqis into pick-up trucks, buses,

---

107 Personal interview. The Robin Sage exercise is the final portion of the SF Q-Course and involves working with indigenous forces to reach a common goal.

108 Linda Robinson with Chitra Ragavan and Julian E. Barnes, "Everybody Loves Ahmad—Not; Why Chalabi's Washington Pals Pulled the Plug," *U.S. News and World Report* (June 7, 2004), http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

109 Personal interview.

and any other vehicles they could find, the SF "handlers" nevertheless set out for their first and only full battalion-sized mission.

All four companies converged on the small city of Shatrah, a town still not under control of the coalition. The mission turned out to be a surprise success. One senior A-Team officer said, "It was a real mission….We reeled in 15 bad guys, over 200 Milan missiles with all their components, and located several other caches."[110] Greeted by euphoric Iraqis, the city was brought under control with "no shots fired."[111] The FIFF, during its first mission, performed superbly. But while the FIFF-SF combination appeared to work at the tactical level, Chalabi had different plans for how the FIFF could be used to benefit his budding political career in Iraq.

Major Burns, the senior SF officer working with the FIFF, planned to utilize the FIFF in securing southern Iraqi cities bypassed by Army and Marine units racing to Baghdad. Given the FIFF's success in Shatrah, Burns was prepared to make further use of the force's skills. Chalabi, on the other hand, wanted the FIFF to escort him into Baghdad. Following a heated debate and a phone call from Chalabi to Wolfowitz, it was agreed that one company would depart with Chalabi.[112] The other three would stay in the south.

From Shatrah the three companies left in the south separated in an attempt to spread their unique services to as many locations as possible. One company broke off and headed northeast to Kut, and another northwest to Karbala. The third company moved toward Hillah, just south of Baghdad. Without any confirmed plan, the companies arrived in each city looking for work.

Foraging for food, water, and a place to sleep, the FIFF managed to set up a number of checkpoints. One of its most successful operations took place in Karbala. Iranians transiting to the religious sites in Iraq were screened by the FIFF while the American SF soldiers stayed hidden. For the week FIFF members manned the

110 Linda Robinson, "The Men in the Shadows: Why Special Forces are Providing the Model for a New Kind of War," *U.S. News and World Report* (May 19, 2003), http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

111 Linda Robinson, "Giving the War a More Iraqi Face," *U.S. News and World Report* (April 21, 2003), http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

112 Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (2004), 284.

checkpoint, there were no incidents. Moreover, if U.S. units working in Karbala wanted to get information on mosques or schools, FIFF soldiers provided access. This was a service the FIFF generally provided in each city.

The company in Hillah initially started patrolling the streets in an attempt to stop the looting that had erupted throughout Iraq. During patrolling and information gathering operations, the FIFF received a tip: a senior member of Hussein's regime was hiding within the city; and, with a hefty compensation ($200,000) the local sheik and his men were prepared to hand him over.[113] Instead of the money, because it was not readily available, the senior SF officer presented the Sheik with a certificate. This was how Iraq's former Deputy Prime Minister, one of the top ten most wanted men in Iraq, was the first man in the deck of cards to be captured.[114]

Kut, lying west of the Iranian border and southeast of Baghdad, was being inundated with exiles pouring over the border from Iran and was threatening to devolve into chaos. The SF A-Team assigned there with the FIFF assessed the situation, and after working out an arrangement with the Marines already in Kut, divided the FIFF into three sections. The first concentrated on security, while the second attempted to coble together a local government capable of civil administration. The third focused on destroying the uncountable arms caches and unexploded munitions scattered throughout the city. For nearly a month the FIFF and SF soldiers attempted to bring stability to Kut. However, Chalabi's actions in Baghdad brought a premature end to the FIFF's work in the struggling city.

American government organizations in Baghdad viewed the FIFF company working alongside Chalabi with hesitation. Their doubts were well founded, but the FIFF did have some initial successes. Using their language and cultural skills, as well as familial ties, FIFF leads were "responsible for the capture of five senior officials."[115] The FIFF passed intelligence regularly to U.S. forces, but was disappointed at the American's slow response. Frustrated by the lack of action based on intelligence they provided and

---

113 Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (2004), 286.

114 Ibid.

115 Marie Colvin, "Saddam's Family 'Safe in Syria,'" *Sunday Times* (April 27, 2003), http://mideastreality.com/saddamsafe.html (accessed September 27, 2005).

caught in the middle of political turmoil surrounding Chalabi, one senior FIFF officer said, "I will never work with the Americans again."[116] At the same time, the Americans were tightening the reins on the exile unit.

Although the FIFF performed some valuable services wherever it operated, local police forces did not want to work with the FIFF and poor logistics made sustained operations difficult. U.S. units, because they had not planned to support the FIFF, did not have enough food, water, and ammo to supply them. Making things more challenging was that most U.S. units, knowing nothing about the FIFF, often viewed the exiles as the enemy. In one instance, a Marine element was prepared to open fire on the AK-47-wielding FIFF members only to be called off by an SF team member.[117] The rules of engagement during this period authorized coalition troops to open fire on any armed Iraqi. The SF A-team's Blue Force Trackers (BFT) also ran out of batteries and their radios no longer held the most up-to-date cryptographic loads.[118] This limited them from speaking to just about every other American unit. Moreover, their radio matrixes were built such that all communications passed first through a Kuwait operations center, creating slow, cumbersome communications.

F.   SHATTERED DREAMS

Shortly after arriving in Baghdad the FIFF company there was turned over to a field artillery unit attached to the Army V Corps. The mission of the FIFF changed from tracking down Ba'thists to manning checkpoints at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). Complaining about living conditions and their mission, the FIFF quickly broke down. The men moved from tattered barracks separated from U.S. barracks into a mosque. They began to argue that they wanted to help their countrymen, not guard a U.S. installation.[119]

---

116 Colvin, "Saddam's Family 'Safe in Syria.'"

117 Linda Robinson, "The Men in the Shadows: Why Special Forces are Providing the Model for a New Kind of War," *U.S. News and World Report* (May 19, 2003), http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

118 Personal interview. BFT is a device that enables a headquarters element to track where U.S. forces are located. This is vital to minimize fratricide.

119 Personal interview.

One incident in particular marred the FIFF and eventually led to its demise. Unfortunately, a number of Chalabi's personal bodyguard force and FIFF members "began taking cars, bank accounts, and real estate," and partaking in looting, two FIFF officers were shot and killed by Coalition forces.[120] Shortly after this incident Chalabi was accused of working for Iran's intelligence service, which he has denied.

Looting had proved one misstep too many, especially since the FIFF had been formed against the wishes of most of the U.S. government and uniformed military, as well as Iraqis vying for leadership positions. At the next pay day, which occurred every two weeks, FIFF soldiers were told to turn in their weapons for their final paycheck. Without a ceremony or certificate, the FIFF was disbanded.[121]

G.   FAILURE BEFORE EXECUTE ORDER

The FIFF program, if initially intended to provide the foundation for the new Iraqi army, must be judged a failure. In existence for little more than two months, the program, funded by money appropriated through the Iraq Liberation Act, was all but treated as an afterthought. Although the companies provided great services once they were fielded, these were not significant enough to overcome the debacle in Baghdad and Chalabi's marred reputation. The FIFF, because of Chalabi's involvement and a lack of consensus within the U.S. government as to what an exile unit could provide, was doomed to fail.

One critical takeaway is that because opposition groups are always going to be politically based, it is important to professionalize their fighting arm. Three days of training is inadequate for this task. Although the FIFF spokesman spouted that the unit worked for the U.S. military, in fact the FIFF was the militant arm for Chalabi's political ambitions. Only sustained military training could have possibly overcome this. SF soldiers should have been able to train and employ their charges over a longer period of time, thereby building strong relationships and a better understanding of unit capabilities. One SF officer in charge of an FIFF company expressed frustration that he had spent

---

120 Warren P. Strobel and John Walcott, "Post-War Planning Non-Existent," *Knight Ridder Newspapers* (October 17, 2004), http://www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/9927782.htm (accessed September 2, 2006).

121 Personal interview.

months waiting in Kuwait for the war to begin, when he could have been training his "guerrillas."[122] Furthermore, Abizaid was correct in arguing against Chalabi's leadership of the FIFF. Had Wolfowitz not overruled his decision to keep Chalabi in Kurdish Iraq, the FIFF might have been less political, longer lasting, and more effective.

Apart from leadership problems, DoD should have more effectively recruited soldiers for the FIFF. Speaking to seasoned veterans of exile operations and government officials, all seem to think it close to impossible to recruit exiles for programs such as the FIFF without relying on opposition groups. While this may be true in many cases, the FIFF may have been different. With the possibility of a second war against Saddam Hussein being discussed shortly after the September 2001 attacks on America, there was ample time to build a database of Iraqi exiles. This way, if needed, *individuals* could have been recruited, instead of relying on an organization like the INC that brought with it too much unwanted political baggage.

Along with personnel and leadership limitations, the conventional military, as well as senior SF officers, did not do an adequate job integrating the FIFF into operational plans to track down Ba'thists. Nor was there sufficient support to make them the core of a new Iraqi army. It is unclear why there were these disconnects, except that the FIFF fell outside of what most units and their commanders are trained or prepared to work with.

The FIFF did provide some value to the U.S. military in Iraq, but this was limited. If Chalabi had been less divisive and the FIFF received more support, could the program have had a greater impact? While this can never be known, it is possible that the FIFF, if used differently, could have served as a rallying point for dissenters very early in the war. It may not have been Americans liberating Iraq, but Iraqis liberating themselves. Although this may now seem like an overly optimistic assessment, the resources necessary to at least try to make the FIFF a success were never forthcoming. This ensured failure from the outset.

---

122 Personal interview.

V. LOOKING TO THE PAST FOR FUTURE SOLUTIONS

DoD's overt use of Iraqi exiles, starting with the Iraq Liberation Act and culminating with the two exile programs exercised during Operation Iraqi Freedom, attracted a flicker of media attention that faded as quickly as the exile programs themselves. Worse, the U.S. government itself seems to have already forgotten the hard lessons learned from working with the Iraqi National Congress (INC) and is already looking at ways to support Iranian opposition groups. The White House recently approved $85 million to support democratic movements in Iran.[123] President Bush's call to the Iranian people to "win your own freedom" is a loosely veiled message advocating regime change in Iran.[124] With an overt policy and approved funding, support of an Iranian opposition is well underway. Presuming that regime change is, indeed, the current administration's goal, U.S. efforts to counter Iran are looking eerily similar to those used until March 2003 when the U.S. military toppled Hussein.

Without question, utilizing exiles, with their unique language skills, cultural knowledge, and connections to their homeland, is worthy of consideration. But, because each exile population is different, each homeland varies, and the U.S. government's goals change, there is no exile playbook. Instead, lessons from historical experiences must be learned and applied carefully to future policies and programs. While specific policy suggestions to rectify mistakes made in the Iraq case are offered in previous chapters, this chapter attempts to provide policy makers and military commanders with a more general overview as they contemplate how to employ exiles in the future. This is not a list of lessons learned, but a reflection on what could be done better.

A. OBJECTIVES

The U.S. government continuously shifted the tasks for the Iraqi opposition groups it sponsored. First, the exiles were expected to receive military training and overthrow Hussein with minimal U.S. military support. Then, the United States shifted them away from military affairs and towards learning how to build democratic

---

123 David Finkel and Karl Vick, "U.S. Push for Democracy Could Backfire Inside Iran," *Washington Post* (March 14, 2006), http://www.washingtonpost.com (accessed March 14, 2006).

124 Guy Dinmore, "President Calling for Iran Regime Change," *Financial Times* (February 2, 2006), http://www.proquest.com (accessed September 7, 2006).

institutions. Next, the exiles were asked to form a combat battalion to serve in a supporting role as America militarily toppled Hussein. Finally, the exiles were asked to train and work as civil affairs augmentees to U.S. units and as an ad hoc battalion escorted by Army Special Forces soldiers.

The tasks shifted primarily for three reasons: the exiles were not as unified, and therefore capable, as the U.S. government originally thought; Hussein's ability to squash uprisings and opposition groups was underestimated; and, the U.S. government was not effective at running exile operations in general. Expecting the Iraqi exiles, as disjointed as they were, to overthrow Hussein, was questionable from the start. Hussein demonstrated his capability and will to put down uprisings and to destroy opposition groups following his defeat in Kuwait. Precisely because of his overwhelming control of Iraqi society the United States looked to exiles. Banking on his unpopularity, the United States expected democratic change to emerge once exile groups took charge—but this was woefully overambitious. Making it even more so was the U.S. government's inability to aid the exiles.

The interagency is not designed to support exile operations. This became readily apparent after the signing of the Iraq Liberation Act. DoS has a bureaucracy designed to support non-governmental organizations and to work diplomatic issues at a state to state level. Sub-state entities that do not fit into this rubric are outside of the department's expertise. Similarly, DoD is not designed to support opposition groups outside of preparing for combat operations. Moreover, the CIA seemed only interesting in fomenting coups with exiles' help. Meanwhile, if these agencies cannot foster democratic opposition groups that can overthrow their country's government, who can?

When facing entrenched regimes, no U.S. effort through exiles alone should be expected to accomplish anything except to embolden authoritarian rulers. There are limits to what exiles can accomplish, and asking them to single-handedly overthrow a government is asking too much. Opposition groups residing inside and outside of Iraq were ineffective against Hussein for almost twelve years. Only DoD, in a large conventional operation, was capable of toppling Hussein. This is not to say that exiles could not have played a larger role in OIF or should not participate in future U.S. military

endeavors. But, outside of providing intelligence to the U.S. government, exiles may be best be utilized by DoD to accomplish only certain specific tasks.

B.   EXILES' ROLE IN DOD

During the years leading up to OIF the Iraqi opposition groups became tainted. Their involvement with the U.S. government lowered their credibility in Iraq. This is especially harmful because national who stay and suffer under an authoritarian regime invariably already look down upon exiles. Ironically then, by supporting exile opposition groups, the U.S. government essentially discredited one community of Iraqis with experience living in a democracy. It likewise undercut those political leaders who may have had the potential to build substantial popular support and it stamped any group that was not overtly anti-American with an American lackey tag.

For all of these reasons, DoD cannot afford to put too many eggs in an 'exile' basket. For instance, DoD cannot turn to opposition groups for recruitment. As mentioned above, this taints individuals and limits their effectiveness. Instead, DoD should have identified Iraqi-American *individuals* based on their language capabilities, familial networks, and cultural compatibility with their homeland. Politically ambitious individuals should have been screened out. All of this should have been done when the ILA was first passed. These individuals could have been identified and vetted and then continued with their life. If and when DoD required their services they could have been contacted, assembled, and trained. For instance, the FIF program demonstrated that integrating exiles trained in civil affairs operations into American units proved extremely effective. Not only was minimal training required, but the exiles' unique skills were better utilized. In addition, being integrated into an American unit decreased suspicion of the United States supporting a specific political party or opposition group.

Finding exiles is not an easy task, but is undoubtedly worth the effort. There are limitations though. Will exiles want to support U.S. military efforts? Will identifying and vetting exiles harm diplomatic processes? Diasporas, as discussed in Chapter I, often push for change in their homeland. It is likely that there will always be some degree of support for military intervention from some exiles. Whether starting the identification process will harm diplomatic efforts is a harder question to answer. Wolfowitz mentioned this as the limiting factor for the use of Iraqi exiles, but if it is done early

enough and is based on addressing military needs, it may be harder to politicize. Moreover, the identification process could apply to all immigrants seeking American citizenship. After providing information on their ethnic background and cultural skills, immigrants could be given the opportunity to place themselves in a volunteer DoD program to provide unique services in times of need in exchange for a shorter road to citizenship.

C. LOOKING FORWARD TO IRAN

The reason for this study has been to draw lessons from the experience of exile programs in Iraq so programs in the future can be more effective. From this analysis, in regards to Iran, I suggest the following policies be adopted:

First, stop, or severely limit, any support to Iranian opposition groups. This includes halting any efforts to build a unified opposition group.

Second, assess the Iranian diaspora in the United States. There are an estimated one million Iranian-Americans, but whether there are individuals interested in aiding DoD efforts in Iran, if DoD ever conducts offensive operations against Iran, needs to be known. Individuals interested in helping in the voluntary program need to submit to a vetting process, and the earlier the better.

Third, within DoD a study needs to be conducted as to how best to train, integrate, and utilize exiles within civil affairs units. The FIF program is a good starting point. Training curricula need to be written and units responsible for the exiles must be designated. Additionally, DoD, at the highest uniformed levels, must come to agreement on the program; OSD alone cannot sponsor the program.

Fourth, DoD should be solely responsible for the program and control funding earmarked for exile programs. Other agencies may be interested in separate exile programs, but DoD must retain control of funding, recruitment, vetting, training, and employment for its programs.

Finally, these programs have limitations that need to be understood. Exiles can, and have, supported U.S. units well. Asking them to become the core of a country's military, however, is beyond their capabilities. Requesting them to work as an

autonomous unit is also too difficult. While of tremendous, even critical, assistance, exiles can never be the sole answer, nor should they be, when it comes to our military's shortfalls in dealing with other populations.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF REFERENCES

Albright, Madeleine. "Policy Speech on Iraq at Georgetown University," March 26, 1997. http://www.fas.org (accessed September 20, 2005).

———. *Madam Secretary: A Memoir.* New York: Hyperion, 2003.

Bacon, Kenneth. "DoD News Briefing." Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense October 28, 1999. http://www.fas.org/ (accessed September 6, 2005).

Baer, Robert. *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism.* New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002.

Barkey, Henri J. "What Worked in Kabul Won't in Baghdad." *Washington Post*, December 9, 2001. http://www.washingtonpost.com (accessed December 4, 2005).

Bos, Stefan. "Hungary Agrees to Allow Military Training For Iraqi Exiles." *Palestine Chronicle,* December 18, 2003. http://www.proquest.com (accessed September 6, 2005).

Bush, George W. "Presidential Determination No. 2003-05." December 9, 2002.

———. "Presidential Determination No. 2003-06." December 9, 2002.

Byman, Daniel, Kenneth Pollack, and Gideon Rose. "The Rollback Fantasy." *Foreign Affairs* (January/February, 1999). http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

———. "All Talk, No Action May be Best with Iraq." *Washington Post* (January 2, 2000). http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed November 20, 2005).

Clarridge, Duane R. *A Spy for All Seasons: My Life in the CIA*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1997.

Clinton, William. "The Iraq Liberation Act," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary (October 31, 1998). http://www.library.cornell.edu/. (accessed November 17, 2005).

Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997.

Collier, Paul. "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy." World Bank. June 15, 2000. www.worldbank.org/research/conflict/papers/ civilconflict.htm (accessed May 15, 2006).

Colvin, Marie. "Saddam's Family 'Safe in Syria.'" *Sunday Times* (April 27, 2003). http://mideastreality.com/saddamsafe.html (accessed September 27, 2005).

Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf. "Open Letter to the President." February 19, 1998. http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/ (accessed November 20, 2005).

Cordesman, Anthony H. "U.S. Policy Toward Iraq." Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Subcommittee (March 1, 2001). http://www.iraqwatch.org/ (accessed December 10, 2005).

Dalgleish, Charles K. *A New "Lodge Act" for the U.S. Army – A Strategic Tool for the Global War On Terrorism.* Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2004. http://www.ndu.edu/nwc/writing/AY04/awardpapers/Nominated%20Paper--Dalgleish--04.pdf (accessed December 10, 2005).

Democratic Principles Working Group. "The Transition to Democracy in Iraq." State Department, December 2002. http://www.iraqfoundation.org/studies/2002/dec/study.pdf (accessed October 5, 2005).

Department of Defense. *Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide.* 2003. http://www.fas.org/asmp/profiles/aid/fy2003supp1/03-DoD.pdf (accessed October 29, 2005).

———, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap.* 2005. http://www. defense.gov (accessed August 30, 2005).

Diamond, Larry. *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq.* New York, NY: Times Books, 2005.

Dickey, Christopher. "The Master Operator," *Newsweek,* March 8, 2006.

Dinmore, Guy. "President Calling for Iran Regime Change." *Financial Times*, February 2, 2006. http://www.proquest.com (accessed September 7, 2006).

Dobbs, Michael. "Old Strategy on Iraq Sparks New Debate; Backers Say Plan Proven in Afghanistan," *Washington Post,* December 27, 2001. http://www.proquest.com (accessed October 11, 2005).

Doyle, James D. "Mission Overview, Free Iraqi Forces." Presented to Task Force Warrior on April 26, 2003. Available at Fort Leavenworth as a reference in *On Point*.

Dunham, Will. "U.S. Dispatches Iraq Exiles to Help Relief Effort," *Reuters*, April 10, 2003. http://www.kurd.org/ (accessed October 10, 2005).

Farouk-Sluglett, Marion and Peter Sluglett. "The Historiography of Modern Iraq," *American Historical Review* Vol. 96 (1991): 1408.

Finkel, David and Karl Vick. "U.S. Push for Democracy Could Backfire Inside Iran." *Washington Post,* March 14, 2006. http://www.washingtonpost.com (accessed March 14, 2006).

Gilmore, Gerry J. "Free Iraqi Forces: 'Members of the Team' Liberating Iraq." *American Forces Information Service*, April 10, 2003. http://www.defenselink.mil (accessed October 27, 2005).

Gordon, Michael R. and Bernard E. Trainor. *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq.* New York: Pantheon Books, 2006.

———. "The Struggle for Iraq: Strategy; Dash to Baghdad Left U.S. Generals Divided," *New York Times,* March 13, 2006. http://www.nytimes.com (accessed March 13, 2006).

Graham, Bradley. "U.S. Airlifts Iraqi Exile Force for Duties Near Nasiriyah." *Washington Post*, April 7, 2003. http://www.washingtonpost.com/ (accessed August 30, 2005).

———. "Shortfalls of Special Operations Command are Cited." *Washington Post*, November 17, 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/11/16/AR2005111602282.html (accessed January 16, 2006).

Graham-Brown, Sarah. *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq*. New York, NY: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999.

Hayes, Stephen F. "An Emotional Homecoming for the Free Iraqi Forces." *The Weekly Standard* Vol. 008, iss. 30 (April 14, 2003). http://theweeklystandard.com (accessed September 1, 2005).

Hockenos, Paul. *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Ihram, Ariel I. "Returning Exiles to Iraqi Politics." *The Middle East Review of International Affairs* Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2005). http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/meria/meria_mar05/meria05_aha01.pdf (accessed September 29, 2005).

Indyk, Martin. "Overview of Middle East Policy—Question and Answer Session." *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 22, 1999. http://cfr.org/ (accessed November 10, 2005).

Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. Public Law 105-338 (October 31, 1998). http://www.findlaw.com/ (accessed November 17, 2005).

Jabar, Faleh A. "Why the Uprising Failed." In *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, edited by Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2003.

Johnson, Haynes. *The Bay of Pigs: The Leader's Story of Brigade 2506*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1964.

Kern, John. "Briefing With Free Iraqi Force Members." *Global Security*. April 10, 2003. http://www.globalsecurity.org (accessed January 21, 2006).

Kingstone, Heidi. "Baghdad Dreaming." *The Jerusalem Report*, August 30, 1999. http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

Loeb, Vernon. "General Wary of Plan to Arm Groups in Iraq." *Washington Post*, January 29, 1999. http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

Lynch, Grayson L. *Decision for Disaster: Betrayal at the Bay of Pigs*. Washington D.C.: Brassey's, 1998.

Makiya, Kanan. "How Saddam Held on to Power." In *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, edited by Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2003.

Nichols, Bill. "Exiles Living in USA Fear Missing Out on Election." *USA Today*, January 6, 2005. http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2005-01-06-iraqis-us_x.htm (accessed October 10, 2005).

Perle, Richard. "Four Broad Lessons from Iraq." Testimony, House Committee on Armed Services. April 7, 2005. http://www.aei.org (accessed December 5, 2005).

Reeker, Philip T. "Daily Press Briefing." U.S. Department of State. December 10, 2002. http://www.state.gov (accessed December 5, 2005).

Ricks, Thomas E. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2006.

Robinson, Linda. "Giving the War a More Iraqi Face," *U.S. News and World Report*, April 21, 2003. http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

———. "The Men in the Shadows: Why Special Forces are Providing the Model for a New Kind of War." *U.S. News and World Report*, May 19, 2003. http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

———— and Kevin Whitelaw. "Deploying the Free Iraqi Forces: What Role for the Anti-Saddam Iraqi Fighters?" *U.S. News and World Report,* April 7, 2004. http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/iraq/articles/fiff030407.htm (accessed August 24, 2006).

———— with Chitra Ragavan and Julian E. Barnes. "Everybody Loves Ahmad—Not; Why Chalabi's Washington Pals Pulled the Plug." *U.S. News and World Report,* June 7, 2004. http://www.usnews.com (accessed June 20, 2006).

————. *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces.* New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.

Russert, Tim. *Meet the Press* (December 11, 2005). http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10364730/ (accessed December 11, 2005).

Seelye, Katharine Q. "Differences Within U.S. Government on Display at New York Meeting of 300 Iraqi Opposition Leaders." *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (February 28, 2000). http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed November 10, 2005).

Sepp, Kalev. "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency." *Military Review* (May 2005). www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/sepp.pdf (accessed July 3, 2006).

Shakya, Tsering. *The Dragon in the Land of Snows.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999. Cited in Barton, Philip J. *Tibet and China: History, Insurgency, and Beyond.* Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, June 2003. http://www.nps.edu/library.

Sheffer, Gabriel. *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Stokes, Bruce. "Ahmed Chalabi: Help Us Liberate Iraq," *National Journal* (July 13, 2002). http://www.cfr.org (accessed December 9, 2005).

Strobel, Warren P. and John Walcott, "Post-War Planning Non-Existent," *Knight Ridder Newspapers,* October 17, 2004. http://www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/9927782.htm (accessed September 2, 2006).

The Whitehouse. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism.* Washington, D.C., April 2003.

Tripp, Charles. *A History of Iraq.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Vandenbrouke, Lucien S. *Perilous Options.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Wolfowitz, Paul. "U.S. Options in Confronting Iraq." Hearing Before the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 105th Congress (February 25, 1998). http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/congress/ 1998_h/hfa48782_0.htm/ (accessed December 10, 2005).

———. "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with the Jerusalem Post." Interview with Janine Zacharia, the *Jerusalem Post,* September 22, 2003. http://www.defenselink.mil/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=3173 (accessed September 6, 2005).

"Establishing a Program to Support a Transition to Democracy in Iraq." The Library of Congress (October 7, 1998). http://thomas.loc.gov/ (accessed November 17, 2005).

"Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest: Joint Report to Congress." Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. May 2003. http://www.state.gov (accessed December 6, 2005).

Middle East Reference. "Iraq's Major Political Groupings." http://middleeastreference. org.uk/iraqiopposition.html (accessed 29 January 2006).

"Population Estimates of Americans of Iraqi/Chaldean Ancestry." Arab American Institute. http://www.aaiusa.org/Issues/Iraq/iraqi_americans.htm (accessed September 12, 2005).

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1.   Defense Technical Information Center
        Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2.   Dudley Knox Library
        Naval Postgraduate School
        Monterey, California